

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: CARRY ON: AMERICAN WOMEN AND  
THE VETERANIST-COMMEMORATION  
OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1917-1945

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The commemoration of the First World War deeply impacted American culture between 1917 and 1945, and incited a contentious debate about the best forms of military memorialization. All kinds of American women participated in commemorations alongside men, the government, veterans, and the military. Even more frequently, they took part in predominantly female memorialization projects, many of which aided veterans.

Organizations composed of American women who believed they served or sacrificed during the First World War defined community service and veterans advocacy as forms of commemoration that they pursued in addition to, or sometimes instead of, more permanent forms of commemoration. In keeping with women's contributions to the war effort and their Progressive era service and reform activities, many American women pursued service-based commemorative projects to serve the

nation in ways normally prohibited to them because of gender-based restrictions on their citizenship.

This dissertation investigates how American women who served during the First World War commemorated the conflict during the interwar period and through the end of World War Two. It employs the term “veteranist-commemorations” to describe the service-based memorialization projects these women advocated, and designates these women as female “veteranist-commemorators.” Rejecting traditional monuments, female veteranist-commemorators placed the plight of male and female veterans at the center of their memorialization efforts. Women’s veteranist-commemorations did not solely address veterans of strictly defined military service, but included anyone who sacrificed during the war.

Female veteranist-commemorators pioneered a new form of commemoration that revolutionized American memorial practices. Their actions forced Americans to rethink their commemorative practices and provided a new way to conceptualize the definition of a memorial. Through their outspoken support of veteranist-commemorations, these women promoted a type of commemoration that included intangible actions, human bodies, and ephemeral activities as crucial, defined parts of the memorialization process. In doing so, female veteranist-commemorators changed the course of American military commemoration, even though their memorialization methods did not gain as widespread acceptance as they hoped.

CARRY ON: AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE VETERANIST-  
COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1917-1945

By

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Advisory Committee:

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## Dedication

In memory of Lewis Finkelstein:  
Seaman First Class, United States Navy, World War II. 1926-2012.

## Acknowledgements

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ABMC: American Battle Monuments Commission

AEF: American Expeditionary Forces

AFI: American Film Institute

ARC: American Red Cross

AWM: American War Mothers

BEF: Bonus Expeditionary Force

CFA: Commission of Fine Arts

DAR: Daughters of the American Revolution

GRS: Graves Registration Service

IWM: Imperial War Museum

NMAH: National Museum of American History

NSCDA: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America

VFW: Veterans of Foreign Wars

WAAC: Women's Auxiliary Army Corps

WAC: Women's Army Corps

WAVES: Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service

WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

WIMSA: Women in Military Service for American Memorial

WOSL: Women's Overseas Service League

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

YWCA: Young Women's Christian Association

## Introduction

In 1924, in the French commune of Issy-les-Molineaux, just outside of Paris, work began on a memorial to Katherine Baker. An American woman who volunteered in Europe as a nurse during World War One, Baker first aided wounded French soldiers, and then worked with the American Red Cross to nurse American troops. Baker continued her work overseas even after she became ill on the job. She never recovered, and died in 1919 upon her return to the United States. Mrs. Ada Knowlton Chew, another American woman who served overseas during the war and afterwards helped found the Women's Overseas Service League, led a committee of mostly American women that decided, in cooperation with a French committee, to create a memorial in Baker's honor. But these committees did not choose to erect a stone statue or a formal monument. They decided to construct a living memorial building that housed a war orphanage for destitute French girls. To honor Baker and the other American women who died as a result of their overseas service, these committees preferred to build a memorial that could help the war's survivors, rather than constructing a statuary monument.<sup>1</sup> This preference for service-based memorials in place of statues represented a choice repeatedly made during the interwar period by the American women who served and sacrificed in the First World War.

The commemoration of the First World War deeply impacted American culture between 1917 and 1945, and incited a contentious debate about the best forms of

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<sup>1</sup> *Carry On*, pg. 12, Vol. III, May 1924, No. 2, Folder: 1924, Box: 1922-1932; *Carry On*, pg. 42, Vol. IV, No. 1, Feb. 1927, Folder: 1927, Box 1922-1932; *Carry On*, pg. 7, Vol. XV, Feb. 1936, No. 1, Folder: 1936, Box: 1933-1939, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

military memorialization. All kinds of American women participated in commemorations alongside men, the government, veterans, and the military. Even more frequently, they followed in the footsteps of the women who commemorated the Civil War and took part in predominantly female memorialization projects, many of which involved aiding veterans.<sup>2</sup>

Organizations composed of American women who believed they served or sacrificed during the First World War defined community service and veterans advocacy as forms of commemoration that they pursued in addition to, or sometimes instead of, more permanent forms of commemoration. In keeping with women's contributions to the war effort and their Progressive era service and reform work, many American women pursued service-based commemorative projects to serve the nation in ways normally prohibited to them because of gender-based restrictions on their citizenship.

This dissertation investigates how American women who served during the First World War commemorated the conflict during the interwar period and through the end of World War Two. What exactly did these women commemorate? Did they commemorate their own wartime contributions, those of American men, or both? Did their commemorative work differ from that of other Americans, and if so, how? How much of an impact did they make on the commemorative discourse in interwar America? What evidence of their memorialization activities remains? Did these

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Women's Relief Corps helped needy Union veterans. Francesca Morgan, *Woman and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 12. Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veteran's Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997). Kelly described women's extensive philanthropic and volunteer work helping returning Union soldiers after the Civil War.

women use their wartime experiences to push for more political rights or greater inclusion in the military? How have their wartime experiences been remembered in the American historical and commemorative narrative of World War One?

I employ the term “veteranist-commemorations” to describe the service-based memorialization projects conducted by American women who served or sacrificed in the First World War, women who I have termed female “veteranist-commemorators.” Rejecting traditional monuments, veteranist-commemorations placed the plight of male and female veterans at the center of their memorialization efforts. Veteranist-commemorations did not solely address veterans of strictly defined military service, but included anyone who sacrificed during the war, such as Gold Star family members who lost relatives in the conflict, women who served or volunteered overseas or on the home front outside of the official military apparatus, and the families of present and former members of the military.

Female veteranist-commemorators pioneered a new form of commemoration that revolutionized American memorial practices. Their actions forced Americans to rethink their commemorative practices and provided a new way to conceptualize the definition of a memorial. Through their outspoken support of veteranist-commemorations, these women promoted a type of commemoration that included intangible actions, human bodies, and ephemeral activities as crucial, defined parts of the memorialization process. In doing so, female veteranist-commemorators changed the course of American military commemoration, even though their memorialization methods did not gain as widespread acceptance as they hoped.

Defined broadly, veteranist-commemorations included any type of community service, philanthropy, relief, welfare, donation, charity, aid, or advocacy work done to honor or memorialize an individual man, woman, group, or event related to the war. These activities could be both intangible and tangible, permanent and impermanent, and they sometimes included more traditional statuary memorials and ceremonies. The war created new communities of veterans, widows, surviving family members, and wounded warriors that female veteranist-commemorators sought to support. Veteranist-commemorations could involve helping disabled veterans, advocating for veterans' rights, supporting the next of kin of military casualties, enabling relatives to visit battlefield graves, pursuing peace efforts, or making monetary donations to a range of charitable causes, such as utilitarian memorials and living memorials. Veteranist-commemorations developed around the turn of the nineteenth century and became more popular during and after the First World War. A utilitarian memorial or living memorial referred to any memorial structure and activities that served a useful purpose in a community at the same time that it operated as a monument. This differed greatly from statuary memorials, which usually only had an aesthetic, artistic, or commemorative purpose. Utilitarian and living memorials often took the form of structures such as stadiums, bandstands, auditoriums, theatres, observation towers, bridges, hospitals, schools, museums, and churches. Living memorial buildings, sometimes also called "liberty buildings," became especially popular since they could both contribute to a community or a cause and be designed to include the decorative

elements that made statuary monuments so popular.<sup>3</sup> During the interwar period, some female veteranist-commemorators understood utilitarian and living memorials as a way to try to combine elements of statuary memorials with community service.

In contrast to more traditional and permanent forms of memorialization, veteranist-commemorations were often temporary and ephemeral, lasting only as long as the women who conducted this work. Rooted in the bodies of these women, veteranist-commemorations were distinctly corporeal. In contrast to inanimate statues, veteranist-commemorations embodied the memory of the dead in the actions of the living. Veteranist-commemorations were at once connected to and the antithesis of the more traditional cemeteries and monuments that proliferated during the interwar period, since the women who conducted veteranist-commemorations sometimes did so in conjunction with more traditional commemorative rites. But because so many of the women's veteranist-commemoration projects were intangible, they left little permanent evidence on the landscape and in American historical memory. This obscured the importance and influence of women's interwar memorialization activities, their impact on the commemorative discourse, and the significance of the First World War to the American culture.

As they pursued veteranist-commemorations, women in the organizations studied fought to include the history of American women's contributions to the First World War into the historical and commemorative narrative. They wanted American women to be honored and memorialized for their wartime services and sacrifices alongside

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<sup>3</sup> For information on "liberty buildings" see: Kristin L. Britanik, "Where are the Ladies' Rest Rooms?: The Evolution of Women-Only Resting Rooms Amid Social Changes of the Early Twentieth-Century," Master's thesis, The University of Maryland, College Park, 2012; 69.

American men. In particular, the women who served overseas or in uniform wanted to be considered veterans, even if they did not officially serve in the military and did not meet the government's definition of a veteran. Women correctly feared that history might obscure the legacy of their wartime services, and they did their best to prevent such historical amnesia. At the same time that the government and the military supported their efforts to commemorate women's wartime contributions, they only allotted women a temporary and partial place in the official military memory of the war, and they reduced women's postwar opportunities for military service. It was not until the Second World War, when women were needed to support the armed forces once more, that women's services to the military became recognized again, although the World War Two servicewomen somewhat overshadowed the legacy of their predecessors. It took a member of the Women's Overseas Service League, Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (R-MA), who served overseas with the YMCA and the Red Cross during World War One, to pass legislation in 1942 and 1943 that allowed women more opportunities to serve in the military and obtain the veterans benefits previously denied them.

Women who pursued veteranist-commemorations tried to influence military policy, national defense, and the evolving veterans' welfare state. They reminded the nation that women had fulfilled the duties of martial citizenship in wartime even before all women been granted the franchise. By continuing their wartime service after the Armistice, they demonstrated women's commitment to national service and their desire to gain the equal citizenship rights and opportunities for military service still denied to them. Although they hoped that the First World War had truly been

‘The War to End All Wars,’ they wanted the next generation of American women to obtain more equal opportunities for military service.<sup>4</sup>

Veteranist-commemorations did not achieve a clear victory over statuary memorials and did not become the dominant form of memorialization during the interwar era. They were often used in conjunction with or in addition to traditional commemorative activities. Female veteranist-commemorators did not always completely reject traditional types of commemoration. They took steps forward and backward as they promoted and developed veteranist-commemorations. Although veteranist-commemorations deeply impacted American culture and society and continued to be used into the Second World War and beyond, my story has no clear-cut before and after. Female veteranist-commemorators formed the avant-garde of the Americans involved in the interwar commemorative discourse. They realized that their preferred form of commemoration was often viewed as an alternative to the popular and more mainstream traditional statuary memorial projects that continued to flourish.

Female veteranist-commemorators believed they served and sacrificed during the war, just like men in the armed forces. They created a broad and inclusive definition of women’s wartime services and sacrifices. This definition incorporated all forms of women’s contributions to the war effort. They expanded the definition of military service to include the diverse types of women’s wartime activities and

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<sup>4</sup> This argument contrasts with Francesca Morgan’s argument that many women’s patriotic groups, especially those active before WWI, reinforced women’s exclusion from military service and supported “men-centered nationalism” even as they championed women’s political activism. During WWI, however, some of these groups did begin to support measures that gave women political standing. Morgan, 4, 101, 105.



defined these as a category of martial citizenship equal to men's official military service.

Service included any of the women who officially or unofficially served overseas or on the home front in any way. This included the women who served in the Army or Navy Nurse Corps, the Navy Yeoman (F), the Women Marines, and any of the dozens of civilian welfare organizations such as the American Red Cross (ARC) and the YMCA. It encompassed the civilian women employed by the military in clerical work, in communications, as health-care workers, or in any number of other capacities and organizations. This definition also included all forms of women's unpaid volunteer work and paid labor on the home front, from knitting bandages to working in a factory or farming the land. Motherhood constituted a wartime service, since according to the ideals of republican motherhood, American women served the nation by raising strong, moral sons to join the military. Widows, military wives, and families also fit into this definition of service. As long as a woman somehow contributed to the war effort, her service needed to be acknowledged, no matter how small or large.

Women's wartime sacrifices were defined just as broadly and encompassed the women who made sacrifices of their own free will and the women whose sacrifices were involuntary due to a wartime tragedy. Sacrifices varied from women who endured physical injuries, illnesses, or emotional damage because of their wartime service, to women who donated their time and money to the war effort and put their country before their own needs. The sacrifices of Gold Star mothers or widows who lost a child or husband during the war received special attention. Gold

Star women and their family members were considered to have sacrificed their loved ones for the nation. Equal status was accorded to the women who were injured or died in wartime service and Gold Star women.

After the war, many women formed and participated in organizations based on their wartime services and sacrifices, and they pursued veteranist-commemorations through these groups. Such organizations included the Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL), the American War Mothers (AWM), the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., the National Yeoman (F) (NYF), and the National Organization of World War Nurses, among others. Some women who were officially in military service also joined the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and some even formed all-female posts of these groups.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the interwar period, female veteranist-commemorators interacted and cooperated with the American Legion, the VFW, and their auxiliaries; other women's' organizations unrelated to the war such as the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America; independent female and male supporters; and other groups of female veteranist-commemorators. Many organizations without direct ties to female veteranist-commemorators also pursued aspects of veteranist-commemorations.

Although both the American Legion and the VFW created women's auxiliaries that frequently conducted veteranist-commemorations, their membership criteria excludes them from the group investigated by this study. Members of these auxiliaries gained admittance based on the organizational membership and military

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<sup>5</sup> Janie Blankenship, ed., *VFW Magazine: Women at War, From the Revolutionary War to the Present*, Special Publication (July 2011), 57, 59, <  
[http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/News\\_and\\_Events/VFWWomenatWar-LOWRES.pdf](http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/News_and_Events/VFWWomenatWar-LOWRES.pdf)>  
(11 Feb 2015).

service of their husband, father, brother, or son, not based on women's own services and sacrifices.<sup>6</sup> Although these female auxiliaries emerged because their members served and sacrificed during the war and wanted to continue that service, and although their male counterparts recognized and valued their service, these organizations were still based on men's membership in the main organization. At the 1925 American Legion National Convention, the Auxiliary's President, Mrs. Claire Oliphant, explained this difference. She declared that "we are unique among women's organizations because we are the only women's organization that takes its entire program of activity from a man's organization."<sup>7</sup> Likewise, membership in the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars was also based on a familial relationship to a male member of the VFW.<sup>8</sup> This membership distinction differentiated these auxiliaries from the organizations that women established based on their own wartime services and sacrifices, distinct from any connections to men. Nevertheless, these auxiliaries and their male counterpart organizations still conducted veteranist-commemorations, sometimes in conjunction with organizations of female veteranist-commemorators. Most famously, the American Legion and VFW Auxiliaries

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<sup>6</sup> William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 296-301; Mrs. Jos. H. Thompson, *History: National American Legion Auxiliary* Vol. 1 (Pittsburgh, PA: Jackson-Remlinger Printing Co., 1926), 34, 36-41; Frank Ernest Hill, *The American Legion Auxiliary, A History: 1924-1934* (Indianapolis, IN: American Legion Auxiliary, 1935), 5-8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 297.

<sup>8</sup> Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign War, "Membership Application Form," *Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign War*, 2011 <<http://www.ladiesauxvfw.org/membership-application-form/>> (29 December 2014); Herbert Molloy Mason, Jr., *VFW: Our First Century* (Lenexa, KS: Addax Publishing Group, 1999), 23, 149, 170-173. Women who served overseas while officially in military service were allowed to join the VFW after WWI but membership was barred to them starting in 1944 and did re-open until 1978.

provided immense support to both organizations' poppy sales that funded disabled veterans.<sup>9</sup>

Female veteranist-commemorations were distinguished by their uniquely female attributes that developed from, and often continued, the work done by women before and during the war. As historian Susan Zeiger explained, women's wartime work emerged from the sex-segregated wage work performed by women in the early twentieth-century such as nursing, clerical work, and telephone operation. These became important skills required by the military during the war.<sup>10</sup> Women also utilized their skills from their Progressive era reform work that aided children, families, the needy, the infirm, immigrants, and the disabled.

Female veteranist-commemorators' focus on service activities, and their use of the words "service," held several layers of significance for turn of the century America, not all of which they approved. Service could refer to military service like that of men, as these women often professed was the case. It could also denote unpaid volunteer and community service similar to women's Progressive era undertakings, which often fit well with their wartime volunteer activities and postwar veteranist-commemorations. But service also alluded to women's work in domestic service as servants, and women's unpaid labor at home serving and caring for their families and husbands. Women often disliked these connotations as they tried to define their

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<sup>9</sup> Penack, 298.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3.

wartime work as military service and assert their professionalism in their various fields.<sup>11</sup>

Likewise, the word “volunteer” had two meanings during this time period. First, in the military context, it could refer to people who volunteered for paid military service as opposed to those who served in the armed forces because they were drafted. Second, in the civilian context, it could refer to people, frequently women, who volunteered to do unpaid work; this was often referred to as “volunteerism.” During the Progressive era and throughout World War One and its aftermath, many women pushed to professionalize the activities they did as volunteers. They often mixed professional employment with voluntary activities. Especially after the war, many women built professional, paid careers from their unpaid volunteer work as they tried to professionalize their fields and assert the monetary worth of their skills.<sup>12</sup>

Before the war, many of the women who participated in the war effort and later championed veteranist-commemorations had connections to the Progressive movement and the suffrage campaign. Many of these women were politically active, committed volunteers and paid, career-oriented professionals in their communities who learned about memorialization from their mothers and grandmothers who had commemorated the Civil War. For example, Lena Hitchcock, who served overseas with the Army as an occupational therapist and became a National President of the

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<sup>11</sup> Zeiger provides a detailed explanation of these different meanings of women’s WWI service. Zeiger, 51, 69, 141.

<sup>12</sup> For more about the professionalization of women’s wartime service, specifically in the field of rehabilitation (now called physical therapy), see: Beth Linker, *War’s Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

WOSL, was from a prominent family in Washington D.C.'s elite society. Prior to the war, she followed the lead of her mother, Virginia White Speel, the daughter of a Union officer in the Civil War who was active in the Republican Party, and participated in Republican politics and volunteer work. In 1916, she served as the chairman of the third precinct of the Washington D.C. branch of the suffragist Congressional Union, the predecessor of the National Woman's Party.<sup>13</sup>

Many, but by no means all, female veteranist-commemorators, like Lena Hitchcock, were from the middle and upper-classes. American women from the lower and middle-classes joined forces with more elite women such as WOSL member First Lady Lou Henry Hoover, American Red Cross leader Mabel Boardman, Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, and Representative Helen Douglas Mankin. From Toledo, Ohio, to Paris, France, women from all walks of life banded together to pursue veteranist-commemorations. Although popular images frequently presented these women as mostly from the wealthy, upper class, as Susan Zeiger argued about the women who served overseas with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), the "vast majority of AEF servicewomen were wage earners, white, literate, lower-middle class, and often self-supporting."<sup>14</sup> One such woman was Merle Egan Anderson, an active member of the Seattle WOSL unit. Before the war, she worked

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<sup>13</sup> Lena Hitchcock, *The Great Adventure*, MS 22, Box 240 and "Lena Hitchcock oral history (03), 14 July 1982, recorded by the WOSL, UC –MS022/7 Lena Hitchcock: MS 22 Box 182, The Women's Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collection; Jessi Ash Arndt, "Family Home Of Mrs. Speel Historic Spot," *The Washington Post*, Jul. 27, 1937, pg. 13, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Mrs. Virginia W. Speel: Republican Committeewoman for Many Years Dies in Capital," *New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1945, pg. 15, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Suffragists at Work Here: Congressional Union Selects Committees in All Police Precincts," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 3, 1916, pg. A5, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 53-81.

<sup>14</sup> Zeiger, 2.

as a telephone operator in Montana. She volunteered to go to France in 1918 as part of the 'Hello Girls,' the telephone operators employed by the U.S. Army Signal Corps. She later acted as the chief telephone operator for the Paris Peace Conference. After the war, when she volunteered to help hospitalized veterans with the WOSL in 1926, she discovered that unlike the women who served in the Yeoman (F), the undefined status of the 'Hello Girls' made them ineligible to receive the World War One Victory Medal and veterans benefits. That year, she began to lead what became a long, but ultimately successful fight to gain veteran status for the 'Hello Girls.'<sup>15</sup>

Despite the prevalence of working-class women, overseas service was mostly limited to white, native-born women, although some Jewish women, and an even smaller group of African-American women, did serve overseas.<sup>16</sup> On the home front, however, all types of women supported the war effort. Even with racial segregation and other restrictions, minorities had more opportunities to participate stateside; this enabled some of them to become veteranist-commemorators after the war.

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<sup>15</sup> "WWI 'Hello Girl' Merle Egan Anderson is Dead," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, pg. D2, 3 June 1986; Sally Gene Mahoney, "1918 Operator Still Seeks Justice After 50 Years," *The Seattle Times*, pg. H6, 20 Jul. 1975, Folder: News clippings of Signal Corps telephone Operator Merle Egan Anderson WOSL Seattle Unit, no box, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>16</sup> Zeiger, 27-32. Zeiger estimates that only three African-American women served overseas during the war as YMCA secretaries and that around a dozen arrives in April 1919. For more about African-American women's wartime service see: Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Addie W. Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1997); Mark Whalan, *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2008); Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*. Despite the founding of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses in 1908, no African-American nurses were allowed to serve in France and only with the onset of the influenza epidemic were African-American nurses accepted for service at military bases in the U.S. Zeiger, 28. For more on the history of African-American female nurses, see: Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

Postwar female veteranist-commemorations remained predominantly racially segregated and female veteranist-commemorators disagreed with each other about racial policies. Like many women's organizations before the war, such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Women's Relief Corps, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and like the AEF during the war, most female veteranist-commemorators in organizations segregated African-American women into separate chapters, if they were allowed to participate at all.<sup>17</sup> Most famously, the U.S. government segregated the Gold Star pilgrimages of widows and mothers to overseas cemeteries, a choice that angered and divided African-Americans.<sup>18</sup> While female veteranist-commemorators frequently argued about the best way to accommodate African-American women, but they rarely reached a consensus. Some members believed in the importance of adhering to Jim Crow and the undesirability of including African-American women. Other white members took more radical stances and pushed to include African-American women alongside white women, perhaps because of the close ties between the earlier abolitionist movement and suffrage. No matter what they believed, female veteranist-commemorators frequently encountered racial issues. Especially as the 1930s progressed, the efforts of African-American women to be included in their activities meant that white women could not ignore the question of race, even if they could not reach a solution amenable to all participants.

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<sup>17</sup> Morgan, 118. For more about gender, race, and Progressive women see: Frankel and Dye.

<sup>18</sup> See chapter 22 "Stars of Black and Gold," in: Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).



This dissertation builds on the rich and voluminous field of scholarship on American historical memory, proposing that historians should expand the definition of commemoration to include community service and advocacy activities.<sup>19</sup> This study follows the lead of other scholars, chiefly Kurt Pieher and Kirk Savage, who have specifically investigated the cultural importance and contentious nature of American military memory and commemoration.<sup>20</sup> As a cultural history that includes a diverse range of interdisciplinary sources, I draw on David Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*.<sup>21</sup> My notion of commemoration as sometimes being embodied in the actions of the living people who commemorate takes inspiration from Alison Landsberg's *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* and Steven Trout's interpretation of texts and literature as memorials in *Memorial Fictions: Willa Cather and the First World War*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The historiography of American memory includes, but is not limited to the following sources which influenced this study: David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *The Journal of American History* 75, No. 4 (March 1998):1117-1129; *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) and Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992); Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996); Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slave: Race, War and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Kristin Ann Hass, *Sacrificing Soldiers on the National Mall* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). I was also inspired by: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995);

Although they have become more diversified, the overwhelming number of studies on American historical memory have focused most on the contentious memory of the Civil War and the Vietnam War.<sup>23</sup> The field of Civil War memory has expanded to include gendered studies of memory, many of which focus on women's participation in memorialization. These works have shown how examinations of military memory through the eyes of American women reveal valuable insights about the memorialization process and American culture and society.<sup>24</sup> Inspired by these works, my dissertation aims to conduct a similar study on American women's commemorations of the First World War.

Until the past ten years, the memory of the First World War in America has received much less attention from scholars than the memory of the Civil War,

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Steven Trout, *Memorial Fictions: Willa Cather and the First World War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> For example: Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1980) and Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Carol Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Gary Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: New York University Press, 2000) and Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997); Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1998); Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Karen L Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003); Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003); Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations & the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Francesca Morgan, *Woman and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*.

Vietnam, and World War Two.<sup>25</sup> My work grew from recent studies of the American memory of World War One and expands the scholarly understanding of the war's memory in the U.S. through a focus on the women who served and sacrificed in the war and pursued veteranist-commemorations. The essays in *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*, edited by Mark A. Snell, presented a sample of how the First World War's memory can be studied. It demonstrated how much more work there is to be done on this topic.<sup>26</sup> Steven Trout's *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941* offered a cultural history of the American memory of the First World War that argued that the war had powerful influence on interwar America.<sup>27</sup> In *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933*, Lisa Budreau examined American commemorations of the war through the issues of the repatriation of the soldier dead, the establishment of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), the Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimages, and an analysis of the political motivations of these commemorative projects.<sup>28</sup> My work

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<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the memory of the American Revolution has only recently begun to receive more concentrated attention by historians. For years, Kammen's *Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* was one of the few works to cover this topic. More recent examinations include: Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (2000); Andrew Burstein, *America's Jubilee: July 4, 1826: A Generation Remembers the Revolution after Fifty Years of Independence* (2001); Sarah Purcell, *Sealed With Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in the Revolutionary America* (2002); and Francois Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (2006). For studies of the memory of the Second World War see for example: John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Mark A. Snell, ed., *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 1, 252.

<sup>28</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933*; Lisa M. Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance: The Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimage and America's Fading Memory of the Great War," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (April 2008); 371-411. The process of recovering and burying WWI fallen soldiers is also examined in: Michael Sledge

continues and develops the discourse she began, along with several other authors who focused on the ABMC cemeteries and the Gold Star Pilgrimages, especially Rebecca Jo Plant's *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* and Ron Robin's *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900-1965*.<sup>29</sup>

I also draw on the extensive scholarship on the memory of the First World War in Europe, Canada, and Australia, which is larger than that focused on the U.S.<sup>30</sup> Most of all, I have utilized Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The*

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*Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Identify, Bury, & Honor Our Military Fallen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Ron Robin, *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900-1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); John Graham, *The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages of the 1930s: Overseas Graves Visitations by Mothers and Widows of Fallen U.S. World War I Soldiers* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2005); Constance Potter, "World War I Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages, Part I," *Prologue* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1999); pp. 140-145; Constance Potter, "World War I Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages, Part II," *Prologue* 31, no. 3 (Fall 1999); pp. 210-215; Holly S. Fenelon, *That Knock on the Door: The History of Gold Star Mothers in America* (Bloomington, Indiana: iUniverse, 2012); Rebecca Jo Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*; Rebecca Jo Plant, "The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages: Patriotic Maternalists and Their Critics in Interwar America" in *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare, and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Marian van der Klein, Rebecca Jo Plant, Nicole Sanders, and Lori R. Weintrob (New York: Bergham Books, 2012); and Lotte Larsen Meyer, "Mourning in a Distant Land: Gold Star Pilgrimages to American Military Cemeteries in Europe, 1930-33," *Markers* 20 (2003): 31-75.

<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the most groundbreaking work in the study of the memory of the First World War in Europe (specifically Great Britain) is Paul Fussell's, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). This work uncovered the ways that the memory of the Great War has seeped into and shaped modern life. Although it is a pivotal work in the field and has certainly influenced my thinking, its methodology does not correspond to mine so it will not be a focus of my historiographical research. Other examples include: Mark David Sheftall, *Altered memories of the Great War: Divergent Narratives of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Mark Connelly, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916-1939* (Rochester, New York: Royal Historical Society, 2001); Nicholas J. Saunderson, ed., *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Marilène Patten Henry, *Monumental Accusations: The Monuments aux Morts as Expressions of Popular Resentment* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996); Richard van Emden, *The Quick and the Dead: Fallen Soldiers and Their Families in the Great War* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2011); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Annette Becker, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930*, trans. Helen McPhail (New York: Berg Publishers, 1998); Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2009); Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, Connecticut Yale University Press, 2006).

*Great War in European Cultural History* (1995).<sup>31</sup> I further Winter's argument that cultural commemorations of the Great War are more complicated than the 'modernist' versus 'traditional' explanations that are often used, but rather represent an overlap of the two.<sup>32</sup> I continue to employ the term 'traditional' merely for the ease with which it describes and categorizes statuary monuments and memorials. The American women who conducted veteranist-commemorations at once rejected and interacted with more traditional forms of memorialization. Their tendency to combine service-based memorial projects with statuary monuments, or to support some conventional memorial activities, demonstrates the interplay between the 'modernist' and 'traditional' memorial rituals that Winter discussed. Traditions and cultures do not change overnight, and during the interwar period, many female veteranist-commemorators and their allies clung to older memorial forms even as they advocated for utilitarian memorials and pursued veteranist-commemorations. These women did not achieve a decisive victory for veteranist-commemorations that purged the commemorative culture of statuary memorials. Female veteranist-commemorators did not want to do so, even if they sometimes preferred veteranist-commemorations. Rather, they complicated the commemorative discourse, challenged older forms of memorialization, and asked Americans to consider experimenting with veteranist-commemorations.

Accordingly, rather than rejecting it, my work complements and expands the existing scholarship on statuary memorials and monuments, since the women I study

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<sup>31</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, 3.

did not always completely discard these forms of commemoration. I want my work to encourage scholars to study and include veteranist-commemorations alongside other forms of memorialization. My work builds upon Jennifer Wingate's comprehensive examination of World War One commemorative sculptures. It expands her work to show how sculptural memorials existed in conjunction with more ephemeral forms of commemoration.<sup>33</sup> Wingate and Andrew M. Shanken, another art historian, both investigate living memorials and lay the foundation for my examination of living memorial buildings and utilitarian memorials.<sup>34</sup> My research deepens Shanken's study of the living memorials constructed during and after World War Two by further elaborating on the living memorials of the First World War that preceded them. I suggest that living memorials had more of an impact on the commemorative culture at that time than Shanken granted them.

As a study of cultural memory and commemoration, my work does not examine the history of American women's actual participation in the First World War in much detail. It is chiefly concerned with what these women did after the war. The topic of women's participation in the war has already been ably covered by Kimberly Jensen's *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (2008), Lettie

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<sup>33</sup> Jennifer Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013); Jennifer Wingate, "Doughboys, Art Worlds, and Identities: Sculpted Memories of World War I in the United States," PhD Dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2002; 39-52; Jennifer Wingate, "Motherhood, Memorials, and Anti-Militarism: Bashka Paeff's "Sacrifices of War,"" *Woman's Art Journal* 29, No. 2 (Fall - Winter, 2008): 31-40; Jennifer Wingate, "Real Art, War Art and the Politics of Peace Memorials in the United States after World War I," *Public Art Dialogue* vol. 2, no. 2 (September 2012): 162-189; Jennifer Wingate, "Over the Top: The Doughboy in World War I Memorials and Visual Culture," *American Art* vol. 19, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 26-47.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew M. Shanken, "Planning Memory: Living Memorials in the United States During World War II," *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 84, No. 1 (Mar. 2002); 130-147. Shanken asserts that living memorials probably dated back to Reconstruction but were considered a new type of memorial after WWI. He argues that living memorials did not become the preferred type of memorial until WWII.

Gavin's *American Women in World War One: They Also Served* (2006), Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider's *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I* (1991), and Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall's *The First, The Few, The Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*.<sup>35</sup> Susan Zeiger's *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919* provided particular assistance in writing this dissertation through her careful research and her analysis of American women's overseas labor; her conclusion briefly touches on women's postwar activities, especially with the WOSL.<sup>36</sup> My work uses her conclusion as a jumping-off point and continues this story in much more depth. Likewise, Elizabeth Cafer du Plessis's book chapter on Alice Moore French examines the American War Mothers and provides a sound history of the group, but does not analyze the commemorative implications of their work, leaving room for my study of that organization.<sup>37</sup> Beth Linker's *War's Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America* presented a rich and useful analysis of the postwar rehabilitation work done

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<sup>35</sup> Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Lettie Gavin, *American Women in World War One: They Also Served* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2006); Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I* (New York: Viking Adult, 1991); Anne Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women : Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War* (Boston: Pandora, 1985); Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, *The First, the Few, the Forgotten*; Susan H. Godson, *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999); Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz, eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). The WOSL is mentioned briefly and tangentially in: Kirsten Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Cafer du Plessis, "Alice French, Indiana War Mothers: From World War I "Kitchen Soldiers" to Postwar Immigrant Reformers," in *Feminist Frontiers: Women Who Shaped the Midwest*, ed. by Yvonne J. Johnson (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2010); 99-118.

in part by American women, many of whom participated in veteranist-commemorations.<sup>38</sup>

The rich scholarship on women's involvement with Progressive era politics, reform work, professional fields, volunteer activities, social welfare, and the suffrage movement forms another important foundation for this study. Female veteranist-commemorators emerged from the Progressive era. They transferred their pre-war experiences with reform work, politics, policy, and suffrage to their wartime service and postwar commemorative activities. Indeed, the suffragist and political activist Molly Dewson and her partner Polly Porter served with the Red Cross in France during the war.<sup>39</sup> Community service and volunteerism constituted an important part of Progressive women's activities, especially through female organizations and settlement houses. By expanding the story of what Progressive women did after the First World War, my research adds to and complements Kathryn Kish Sklar's "Hull House: A Community of Women Reformers" and Robyn Muncy's *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*, to name just two works that I build upon.<sup>40</sup> Studies of republican motherhood and the history of American motherhood

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<sup>38</sup> Linker, *War's Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America*.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothy and Carl Schneider, 59-62; Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 73-85.

<sup>40</sup> For more about women involved with variants of the suffrage movement, social reform, and Progressivism, see: Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Israels Perry, *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics*; Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, eds., *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991); Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Summer 1985); 658-677; Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 1992); 19-54; Maureen A. Flanagan, *Seeing with their Hearts:*



have also informed my analysis of the American War Mothers and the Gold Star Mothers. These studies enabled me to argue, as female veteranist-commemorators did themselves, that motherhood constituted a wartime service and sacrifice.<sup>41</sup>

Many female veteranist-commemorators had been actively involved in various women's clubs, female organizations, and volunteer groups around the turn of the century. They used their experiences and skills with these groups during their wartime service and postwar memorialization work. Their involvement in postwar commemorative organizations and activities was the natural extension of their pre-war experiences. My work builds off of studies of women's organizations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Anne Fior Scott's *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*, and Karen J. Blair's *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* and *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*.<sup>42</sup> Many organizations of female veteranist-commemorators can be classified as patriotic associations, war

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*Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of the Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992); Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993); S.J. Kleinberg, *Widows and Orphans First: The Family Economy and Social Welfare Policy, 1880-1939* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Sonya Michel, *Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980); Anne Fior Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Karen J. Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Karen J. Blair, *Joining In: Exploring the History of Voluntary Organizations* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2006).

organizations, or hereditary societies, according to Blair's typology of American voluntary organizations.<sup>43</sup> I also further explore Christopher Capozzola's assertion that during the years surrounding World War One, voluntary organizations played an important part in American life and often defined Americans' citizenship obligations and relationships to the state.<sup>44</sup> The work conducted by female veteranist-commemorators, especially their support of needy veterans who they provided with their own forms of social welfare, testifies to the accuracy of Capozzola's thesis. My work reveals another way that Americans fulfilled their citizenship obligations through extra-governmental organizations.

My investigation of how female veteranist-commemorators argued for their right to be recognized as war veterans and pushed for veterans' benefits during the interwar period allows me to make a gendered intervention into the scholarship on veteran politics. Previously, much of this field has focused on male veterans and their struggles to procure benefits and aid. My work argues that women, especially women who considered themselves female veterans, also participated in veteran politics and shaped the debates about the privileges earned by American veterans. Stephen R. Ortiz's *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* helped me contextualize the role of female veteranist-commemorators in interwar veteran politics, enabling me to better understand their political stances and choices.<sup>45</sup> My work aims to include women veterans in the overall trajectory of

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<sup>43</sup> Blair, *Joining In: Exploring the History of Voluntary Organizations*, 52-55

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, eds.,

the history of veteran politics in the U.S., and to specifically add them to the analysis of the contentious struggle for veterans' benefits before, during, and immediately after the New Deal.

Several other fields also influenced my work. The literature on the role of the U.S. in the First World War forms a historiographical base for my project. My work diversifies and expands this scholarship, most notably, Jennifer Keene's *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*.<sup>46</sup> I also draw from recent studies of the American Red Cross, particularly Marian Moser Jones' *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal* and Julia Irwin's *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*.<sup>47</sup> My analysis of the political meaning of the film *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933), and its support of female veteranist-commemorations, follows the lead of Saverio Giovacchini and other film historians who argue that 1930s Hollywood films conveyed serious political messages.<sup>48</sup> My work also follows Michael Sherry's *In the Shadow of War: The*

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*The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900*.

<sup>46</sup> Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); John S. D. Eisenhower with Joanne Thompson Eisenhower, *Yanks: The Epic Story of the American Army in World War I* (New York: Touchstone, 2001); Bryan Farwell, *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917-1918* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999); David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Linker, *War's Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America*; Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Marian Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

<sup>48</sup> Saverio Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics on the Age of the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Social History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1975); Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); Andrew Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films* (New York: New York University Press, 1971).

*United States Since the 1930s*. Sherry examined the creation of a militarized American society in the twentieth century.<sup>49</sup> I continue his work by showing how in the 1920s and 1930s, civilian female veteranist-commemorators were deeply involved in military memory and the politics of national defense.

My theoretical perspective relies heavily on Pierre Nora's idea of *lieux de mémoire*, Maurice Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, and Benedict Anderson's exploration of imagined communities.<sup>50</sup> Nora explained memory as occurring in *lieux de mémoire*, sites or places of memory, asserting that "memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects."<sup>51</sup> The importance that Nora placed on *lieux de mémoire* justifies my focus on sites of memory such as memorials, landscapes, cemeteries, and buildings as key ways to understand commemoration. Nora also argued that memory is selective, and that it "only accommodates those facts that suit it."<sup>52</sup> I take this selectivity of memory into account, especially when I explore the partial and temporary place accorded to women in the commemorative narrative of World War One.

My examination of female veteranist-commemorators and the organizations they formed to collectively memorialize their wartime experiences has been influenced by Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory. Halbwachs posited

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<sup>49</sup> Michael G. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1999): 7-24; Pierre Nora, ed. *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire, Volume 1-3*, Translated by David P. Jordan. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," 7-24; 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

that individuals recall memories in relation to the memories of other people and jointly as part of a group. His argument that “the memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it,” directly supports my assertion that the memory of women’s World War One service, and women’s intensive commemoration of that conflict, survived through female veteranist-commemorators and faded after their deaths.<sup>53</sup> Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as an imagined political community, and the importance of military memory—particularly the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—to nationalism, influenced my analysis of how female veteranist-commemorators defined their nationalism in relation to each other. Anderson also shaped the conclusions I draw about the larger impact of female veteranist-commemorations.<sup>54</sup>

Commemorative service was not a new invention after World War One. It had been pursued in various iterations for decades, especially after the Civil War, and it accelerated in popularity during the World War One era. The Progressive era’s focus on community development and improvement probably led to an increasing desire to help the community while memorializing a person or event. At the turn of the century, living memorial buildings dedicated for use by a particular community began to come into vogue. Brevet Major General George Washington Cullum left a bequest in his will to construct a hall at his alma mater, West Point, for the use of the officers and graduates of the United States Military Academy there. Opened in 1900 and designed by Stanford White, it contained numerous commemorative plaques and

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<sup>53</sup> Halbwachs, 144.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, 9-10.

memorialized Cullum while also serving the West Point community, as it continues to do today.<sup>55</sup> In 1917, the American Red Cross opened the Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War in Washington D.C., a living memorial building constructed to house their headquarters. These buildings and others set a precedent for future living memorial buildings dedicated to ongoing service missions.

Women's veteranist-commemorations began even before the end of the war. After the widely publicized execution of British nurse Edith Cavell by the Germans on October 12, 1915, a group of men and women who held a memorial service for her in Boston decided to take further action to honor her.<sup>56</sup> They raised money to send an "Edith Cavell Nurse From Massachusetts" to serve with the British as a nurse in France in honor of Cavell's memory. They selected Miss Alice. L. F. Fitzgerald for the position. In 1916, Fitzgerald went to France wearing a specially created medal that identified her as the "Edith Cavell Memorial Nurse." Excerpts from her letters were published in the U.S. to gain funds to keep her overseas. Through Miss Fitzgerald's work as a nurse, she and this committee exemplified the ideals of veteranist-commemorations even before the war's conclusion. Rather than building a statue, they channeled their desire to memorialize Cavell into a project that helped others just as Cavell did before her death. This choice foreshadowed similar choices

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<sup>55</sup> The United States Military Academy, "Cullum Hall History," *United States Military Academy: West Point*, n.d. <<http://www.usma.edu/dca/SitePages/Cullum%20Hall%20History.aspx>> (30 December 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Alice Louise Florence Fitzgerald, *The Edith Cavell Nurse From Massachusetts* (Boston: W.A. Butterfield, 1917) <<https://archive.org/stream/edithcavellnurse00fitz#page/n7/mode/2up>> (30 December 2014). Special thanks to Dr. Marian Moser Jones to alerting me of this source and suggesting I use it in this project.

that would be made by female veteranist-commemorators and their allies after the war.

Another American women, Anna Coleman Ladd, also performed veteranist-commemorations that aided disabled soldiers in France during the war. A professional sculptor, Ladd established the American Red Cross Studio for Portrait-Masks in Paris in 1917 to create copper masks for wounded soldiers with facial disfigurements (figures 0.1 and 0.2). Awarded the French Legion of Honor for her work, as an early veteranist-commemorator, Ladd used her talents as a sculptor to help wounded soldiers, rather than pursuing purely artistic projects which would not help those affected by the war. She transferred her skills as a crafter of memorials and sculptures to the mission of healing and recreating human bodies mutilated by combat. She explained that her object in her mask work “was not simply to provide a man a mask to hide his awful mutilation, but to put in that mask part of the man himself—that is, the man he had been before tragedy intervened.”<sup>57</sup> During the war, the human body became Ladd’s medium. Her masks served as bodily memorials to the men she aided, making these men living memorials to their own wartime services and sacrifices, perhaps in the purest sense of the concept.

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<sup>57</sup> “How Wounded Soldiers Have Faced the World Again with “Portrait Masks”” *St Louis Post-Dispatch Sunday Magazine*, March 26, 1933 (supplement to the newspapers), Folder: American Red Cross Studio for Portrait-Masks File, Scrapbook, 1914-1923 (Folder 2 of 7) Folder 4 of 11, 1914-1925, B2.68, Box 2 of 7 Letters (1920-1937), Anna Coleman Ladd Papers, CA. 1881-1950, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The author conducted extensive research in this collection.



Figure 0.1: Before and after images of a wounded soldier wearing one of Anna Coleman Ladd's masks. American Red Cross photographer. Anna Coleman Ladd Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



Figure 0.2: Some of Anna Coleman Ladd's masks for disfigured soldiers shown displayed in her Paris studio. Note how they resembled sculptural memorials Ca 1918/American Red Cross, photographer. Anna Coleman Ladd Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



After the war, Ladd returned to her work as an artist and designed several memorials to the First World War which, given her intimate experiences with the conflict's destruction of the human body, depicted the war's horrors.<sup>58</sup> Her pre-war sculptural work had already portrayed war in a negative light. Her overseas experiences further inspired her to represent the ugly realities of war and pacifist sentiments in her war memorials.<sup>59</sup> As a member of the Boston WOSL Unit, Ladd continued to pursue veteranist-commemorations at the same time that she created traditional statuary memorials. She even designed a medallion for the WOSL that they presented to Marshal Foch (figure 0.3).<sup>60</sup> Although some of Ladd's sculptural memorials survive today, her intangible work as a veteranist-commemorator, and the living memorials embodied in the reconfigured faces of the soldiers she helped, survived only as long as Ladd and those men lived.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboy*, 119, 163-167, 180; Jean Fitzgerald, revised by Jayna Josefson, "A Finding Aid to the Anna Coleman Ladd Papers, 1881-1950, in the Archives of American Art," July 20, 2012 < [http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/anna-coleman-ladd-papers-10600/more#section\\_10](http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/anna-coleman-ladd-papers-10600/more#section_10) > (30 December 2014).

During the war, others pursued similar work with facial wounds, facial masks and soldiers with disfigured faces, such as Harold Gillies and Francis Derwent Wood in Great Britain. See: Suzannah Biernoff, "The Rhetoric of Disfigurement in First World War Britain," *Social History of Medicine*, 2011, published online, 27 Feb 2011 < <http://shm.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/02/27/shm.hkq095.short> > (11 February 2015); Suzannah Biernoff, "Flesh Poems: Henry Tonks and the Art of Surgery," *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (March 2010); 25-47; Suzannah Biernoff and Jane Tynan, "Making and Remaking the Civilian Soldier: The First World War Photographs of Horace Nicholls," *Journal of War and Culture Studies, Special Issue: Men at War*, 5.3 (Sep. 2012); 277-295; Suzannah Biernoff, "The Face of War," in *Ugliness: The Non-Beautiful in Art and Theory*, eds. Andrei Pop and Mechthild Widrich (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*, 163-167, 180.

<sup>60</sup> *Carry On*, pg. 4, Jan. 1922, Vol. I, No. 1, Folder: 1922, Box: 1922-1932, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.



Figure 0.3: Women's Overseas Service League plaster medallion/unidentified photographer. A caption on the back of this image notes that League presented this medallion to Marshal Foch. Anna Coleman Ladd Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This dissertation uses a diverse range of sources to construct an interdisciplinary cultural history of female veteranist-commemorations between and during the two World Wars. It relies heavily on the papers associated with the organizations of female veteranist-commemorators, especially their magazines, convention and meeting minutes, and other official files. It uses textual sources such as newspapers, correspondence, memoirs, speeches, scrapbooks, minute books, official government and military records, and other written sources. The built environment also forms a significant part of this project, so architecture, memorials, monuments, buildings, cemeteries, images, art, and other aspects of the broader cultural landscape operate as evidence. Textiles, artifacts, public history, and museum exhibits form another source, as do films, music, dance, and oral histories. By using eclectic sources, I have

attempted to gauge the impact of women's commemorative activities on multiple levels of American culture and society.

The chapters that follow are organized thematically. They demonstrate the myriad ways that female veteranist-commemorators influenced the interwar discourse and debate on the legacy of the First World War. Chapter one focuses on the Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL), an organization composed of women who served overseas during the war as unpaid volunteers, official members of the military, wage workers, trained professionals, or in any other capacity. It argues that because of their unique wartime experiences, these women, who considered themselves veterans, preferred veteranist-commemorations to traditional statuary memorials, which they often rejected. Chapter two analyzes the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, a living memorial building constructed by the American Red Cross to honor women's services and sacrifices in World War One. Intended to house ARC service activities as it commemorated women, this building represented an attempted compromise between traditional statuary commemoration and veteranist-commemorations that some women viewed as a failure.

Chapter three investigates the American War Mothers (AWM), an organization of mothers of World War One service members. These women believed their status as war mothers constituted a national service, and they pursued veteranist-commemorations to continue their national duties. Chapter four turns to the Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimages of 1930 to 1933, a government sponsored program that sent the mothers and widows of deceased service members to visit their loved one's overseas grave. This chapter reframes the pilgrimages as a form of veteranist-

commemorations performed by the government for the Gold Star women at their own behest. These women believed that such a trip was the most appropriate way to honor their sacrifices and their deceased relatives.

Chapter five focuses on a collection of women's wartime uniforms gathered by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America and exhibited at the Smithsonian's National Museum in the 1920s. This exhibit was a utilitarian memorial to women's wartime service built through philanthropic acts. The sixth and final chapter places women's veteranist-commemorations within the political and social context of the interwar period, and the 1930s in particular. Using the film *Gold Diggers of 1933*, it reveals how female veteranist-commemorators influenced American culture so deeply that their ideas were portrayed on screen through this film's finale, "Remember My Forgotten Man."

By drawing upon eclectic examples of women's interwar veteranist-commemorations, I demonstrate these women's far-reaching impact on American culture and society. Irrevocably changed by their wartime experiences, female veteranist-commemorators actively sought to promote a form of memorialization that honored their wartime services and helped to heal the wounds of war. Although female veteranist-commemorators often left little permanent physical evidence of their work, their importance cannot be underestimated, and their lasting legacy must be understood, for they re-conceptualized American commemorative practices.

## Chapter 1: Banding Together: The Women's Overseas

### Service League and Veteranist-Commemorations

Re-Dedication:

As only those  
Who dared War's horrors:  
Who felt War's pain;  
Who shared War's terrors;  
Who saw War's slain:  
Who bear War's scars  
Of flesh and brain,  
Can know War's awful Truth  
And wholly realize  
The noble sacrifice  
Of those who gave their lives to Glory,--

Who with them, hour by hour,  
Guarded the Faith which gave them power  
Gladly to die,  
Can surely see and humbly feel  
The sacred trust their deaths reveal.

Then,  
While today  
We celebrate  
The victory to them denied,  
Let us, our lives, re-dedicate  
To keep alive the Faith which led  
Those glorious Legions of the Dead.<sup>61</sup>

M' Edna Corbet, A.R.C. Searcher, Meuse-Argonne Offensive,  
Kansas City Unit, WOSL, *Carry On*, November 1926.

In her poem, "Re-Dedication," published on the front cover of the November 1926 issue of *Carry On*, the national magazine of the Women's Overseas Service League

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<sup>61</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. V, No. 4, November, 1926, front cover, Folder: 1926, Box 1922-1932, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

(WOSL), M' Edna Corbett explained the postwar commemorative mission of the American women who served overseas during the First World War (figure 1.1). When these women returned to the United States, they realized that their wartime experiences had changed their ideas about military commemoration. As the title of Corbett's poem indicated, rather than just building war memorials, they re-dedicated their lives to service projects in memory of the war dead.

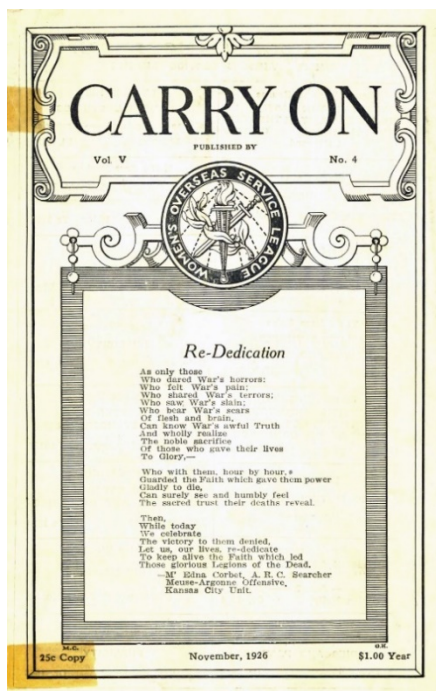


Figure 1.1: The poem “Re-dedication” featured on the front cover of *Carry On*, Vol. V, No. 4, November, 1926. Women’s Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.

The members of the Women’s Overseas Service League embraced veteranist-commemorations and believed that they could best memorialize the First World War through service to the living, especially male and female veterans. They defined

community service as an alternative form of commemoration. They chose to honor the past by positively influencing the present and the future, rather than glorifying war by constructing monuments. Their agenda of veteranist-commemorations focused on service to former overseas women, service to male veterans, and advocacy for former overseas women's rights and inclusion in the war's national historical narrative. Their support of female veterans was especially important since many were ineligible for government benefits, inspiring the WOSL to institute their own forms of social welfare to aid them.

By continuing their national service, WOSL members reminded the nation that they too had served in the war and gone above and beyond the duties of citizenship, even before many could vote. The group staked a claim for women in the interwar commemorative culture and tried to include the memory of women's overseas service in the war's history. After all women gained the franchise in 1920, the organization created space for women to support the armed forces despite restrictions on their participation in the military. In the process, the WOSL helped redefine commemoration to include service, advocacy, and social welfare, and demonstrated that a memorial could be formed from human acts just as it could be carved from stone.

### *A Brief History of the Women's Overseas Service League*

The Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) constituted one of the most important women's First World War organizations in the United States. It continued

the bonds of sisterhood among overseas women and provided them with a way to serve the nation through community service, commemoration, advocacy, and patriotic work.<sup>62</sup> The WOSL evolved from local groups of overseas women that formed upon their return to the U.S. Mrs. Oswald (Ada Knowlton) Chew, who served overseas from 1916 to 1919, decided to unite these groups into a national organization. She helped plan the first national convention in Philadelphia in May 1921 that officially organized the national Women's Overseas Service League.<sup>63</sup> According to the group's 1925 Articles of Incorporation, membership was open to any American woman or any foreign woman who lived in America but served overseas "for the success of the Allied Cause during any part of the World War between August the first, nineteen hundred and fourteen, and January the first, nineteen hundred and twenty."<sup>64</sup> To organize a national league, the WOSL arranged its self-governing local units into nine Corps Areas that corresponded to the War Department's Army Corps Areas.<sup>65</sup> A national board of officers and committees planned the annual national conventions, published the magazine *Carry On*, and coordinated other national matters.

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<sup>62</sup> "Incorporation of Women's Overseas Service League Hearing Before the Committee on the Judiciary House of Representatives Sixty-Seventh Congress Second Session on H.R. 7299 Serial 23 January 12, 1922" pg. 3, Folder: Articles of Incorporation 1922-29, Box: WOSL Records: National Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Manuals, Minutes, Finances, Rules of Procedure, 80.19.19 +etc. Box 1, National WWI Museum; Helene M. Sillia, *Lest We Forget: A History of the Women's Overseas Service League* (1978), 5. Sillia was a WOSL member and the National Historian and wrote this history for the WOSL who published it in 1978. Thus far, the WOSL has only been found in one secondary source; Susan Zeiger discusses the WOSL's postwar advocacy for women veterans briefly in her final chapter. Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919*.

<sup>63</sup> Sillia, 5, 72, 217.

<sup>64</sup> "Incorporation of Women's Overseas Service League Hearing..." pg. 4.

<sup>65</sup> "Articles of Incorporation of the Women's Overseas Service League: By-laws of the Women's Overseas Service League," pg. 6-7, Folder: Articles of Incorporation 1922-29, Box: WOSL Records: National Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Manuals, Minutes, Finances, Rules of Procedure, 80.19.19 +etc. Box 1, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.



The WOSL intended to become more than just a friendly social association of former overseas women: they focused on serving others. The Articles of

Incorporation stated that:

the object of this association is to keep alive and develop the spirit that prompted overseas service, to maintain the ties of comradeship born of that service and to assist and further any patriotic work; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to work for the welfare of the Army and Navy; to assist, in any way in their power, the men and women who served or were wounded or incapacitated in the World War; to foster friendship and understanding between Americans and Allies in the World War.<sup>66</sup>

The WOSL united its members to serve local communities, states, and the nation in these ways. Although they appreciated the work done by women on the home front, by going overseas they experienced unique hardships that created what Mrs. Chew described as a “feeling of sistership among those who went over there.”<sup>67</sup> They used this sisterhood and the unique legacy of their wartime experiences to continue their service in the postwar era. As much as they could, the WOSL tried to be apolitical and concentrate on service, although it was not always possible. In 1923, National President Louise Wells explained how she hoped that “men may say of us, not, ‘They support this or that’; not ‘They oppose this or that’; not ‘They want this or that’; but ‘They serve.’”<sup>68</sup>

The WOSL saw themselves as a sister organization to the American Legion, with whom they were closely aligned and often cooperated. In 1923, the American Legion National Commander Alvin Owsley even described the WOSL as the

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<sup>66</sup> “Articles of Incorporation,” pg. 4. Although the WOSL failed to get a Congressional Charter to nationally incorporate the organization, they were incorporated in the State of Indiana in 1924 and granted a charter from that state in 1926. Sillia, 5

<sup>67</sup> Hearing, 8. 13-14

<sup>68</sup> Sillia, ii.

American Legion's "comrades in service" (figure 1.2).<sup>69</sup> Although the women who officially served in the military could join the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars, many overseas women served with civilian organizations and were ineligible for membership in these groups because they did not officially serve in the military.<sup>70</sup> The creation of the WOSL allowed these women to gain representation and inclusion in a veteran's organization similar to the American Legion. Mrs. Chew even admitted that they intended to create an organization based on the same principles as the Legion, and the Legion endorsed the WOSL's bill that sought a national charter, but failed to succeed.<sup>71</sup>



*Flags and Colors of the American Legion and the Women's Overseas Service League at Suresnes, Memorial Day, 1930.*

Figure 1.2: The WOSL joined with the American Legion during a Memorial Day ceremony at Suresnes American Cemetery outside of Paris during the WOSL's 1930 National Convention in Paris. *Carry On* August 1930 Vol. IX No.3, pg. 36. Women's Memorial Foundation, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection. Courtesy of the Women's Memorial Foundation.

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<sup>69</sup> Sillia, 5. Alvin Owsley, "Comrades in Service—A Message From the American Legion," *Carry On*, May 1923, Vol. II, No. 2, pg. 1, 6, 24. MS 22 Box 36, The Women's Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

<sup>70</sup> "Incorporation of Women's Overseas Service League Hearing..." pg. 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 5-6.

As highly trained and experienced women, WOSL members wanted to continue using their skills to serve the nation after the war. Mrs. Chew envisioned the League as serving the U.S. Government “in case of future wars, catastrophes, or need of any kind, to have a body of women trained in the Great War, in service of every kind; organized and ready for action so that they can be called upon at a moment’s notice...in other words, it is a reserve army for the United States government.”<sup>72</sup>

Having served overseas, these women did not want to fully retreat back to the traditional female domestic sphere; they wanted to use their distinctly female skills in the public sphere. As Louise Wells explained in 1922 during her tenure as National Service Chairman, when the overseas women came home, “something said to us—I suppose it is the maternal instinct in every good woman which said that the women had served well over there, and that we had no families, no children, and we wanted to continue to serve. We came back wanting to work, wanting to carry on.”<sup>73</sup>

Although the WOSL embraced the often feminine nature of their work, newly armed with the vote and fresh from their wartime experiences, they yearned to continue their national service and to exercise the full rights of citizenship. Through the League, they created space for women to engage in national defense and pushed for expanded opportunities to become civic leaders.

Serving and advocating for male and female veterans became the WOSL’s most important mission and soon overtook their initial intentions to also serve as a “reserve army.” Mrs. Chew described WOSL women as wanting “to go on with the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

service that we have started. These women, who gave their services willingly during the World War, now wish to continue their services to humanity and their country.”<sup>74</sup> She explained how, in particular, WOSL members wished “to help and are already helping the soldier and sailor injured during the World War and those of their own ranks who are suffering or in need.”<sup>75</sup>

The WOSL embodied their focus on service in the title of their organizational magazine: *Carry On*, a phrase that became a sort of unofficial WOSL motto. An advertisement for the Red Cross featured on the back cover of the August 1925 edition of *Carry On* epitomized this maxim. A photograph titled “The Greatest Mother Still “Carries On,” showed two female nurses assisting two severely disabled veterans, one in a wheelchair and the other, a double amputee, resting on a wheeled board (figure 1.3). The image is captioned: “In the Homes, in the Government Hospitals, and the Veterans Bureau Offices it is Serving Those Who Served.” This image plays on the Red Cross’s wartime nickname as the “World’s Greatest Mother,” a phrase commonly featured in wartime propaganda posters, as well as the WOSL magazine’s title, to demonstrate the overlapping missions of the ARC and the WOSL, which included many former and present ARC members.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

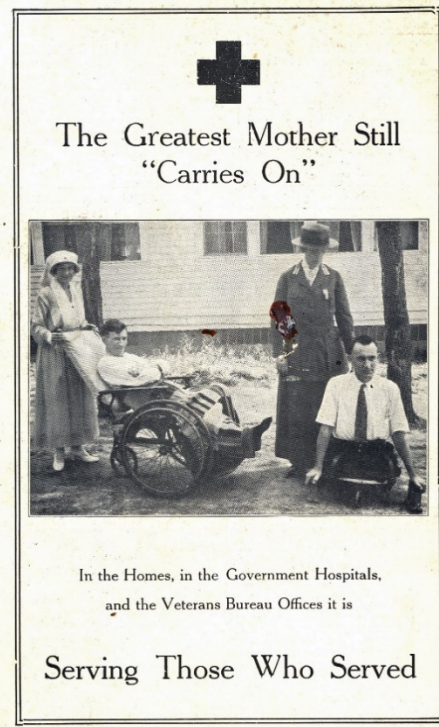


Figure 1.3: Back cover of *Carry On*, Vol. IV, August 1925, No. 3. *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women's Memorial Foundation.

The WOSL placed special importance on serving and commemorating women veterans like themselves.<sup>76</sup> They advocated for overseas women to receive government benefits that many were denied because they lacked official veteran status. The League often memorialized the women who died overseas and commemorated women's wartime service alongside men's to try to prevent their wartime contributions from being forgotten. Louise Wells described how the WOSL women "took overseas with us a torch we lighted in our own hearts, and it was our purpose to keep that burning, which we did, and when we came back we wanted to

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Mrs. Chew emphasized that the WOSL had a duty "to assist its own members and obtain recognition and memorials for the overseas women who died or were killed in service."

preserve that spirit.”<sup>77</sup> This idea of a torch of service appeared in the League’s emblem, which featured a lit torch spreading its light, symbolizing how the WOSL spread the light of its service through their postwar activities (figure 1.4). Wells worried that “if that spirit...is to be allowed to die out without some permanent form of record, without something which can be handed down to our successors, I think that the country will have lost a very precious thing.”<sup>78</sup> She believed that the history of American women’s overseas service needed to be preserved in the historical record so future generations would know how women served their country even before they could all vote or officially enter every branch of the military. Recording this history, she noted, might help future generations of women gain more opportunities to serve in the military.



Figure 1.4: WOSL emblem from the cover of *Carry On*. *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 16.

Over 16,000 American women are estimated to have served overseas during World War One.<sup>79</sup> This provided a large population of women from which the WOSL recruited members. Members of the League represented over one hundred of the different organizations with which women served overseas. The annual WOSL rosters published as supplements to *Carry On* usually contained an entire page dedicated to a list of these organizations.<sup>80</sup> These rosters even included some foreign organizations such as Great Britain's Queen Alexandria's Military Nursing Service and the French Red Cross. Some WOSL members were American women who served abroad with foreign groups, often before the U.S. entered the war, and other members were Europeans who moved to the U.S. after the war.

The League's broad membership captured the diverse ways that American women served overseas during the conflict, and WOSL members took pride in uniting women across regional, economic, social, and religious differences.<sup>81</sup> By 1925, 2,086 women had joined the WOSL and its members constantly worked to increase their membership rosters.<sup>82</sup> Members recognized and appreciated the League's attempted inclusivity. Miss Blanton, a member from Richmond, Virginia,

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<sup>79</sup> Zeiger, 2; Sillia, 1; Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, 287-289. Estimates of how many American women served overseas in WWI vary widely. Zeiger estimated there were at least 16,000 while Sillia estimated about 90,000. Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider argued that 25,000 seemed like a "realistic, conservative figure."

<sup>80</sup> For example, the Roster from November 1940 listed 140 different organizations. These included the American Committee for Devastated France, the American Library Association, the Army Nurse Corps, the American Red Cross, the Harvard Surgical Unit, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Knights of Columbus, the Navy Nurse Corps, the Salvation Army, the Signal Corps, the U.S. Navy, the YMCA, and the YWCA just to name a few.

Women's Memorial Foundation, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* periodical Collection; Box: *Carry On* 1940-19471 Folder 1940; "Roster: Supplement to Carry On", Vol. XIX, Nov. 1940, No.4, Pg. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Incorporation of Women's Overseas Service League Hearing..." 6

<sup>82</sup> Sillia, 6.

explained how during the war, “those of us who were born and bred in a brier patch have been broadened by having contact with other parts of the world and with women from the West and from the North.”<sup>83</sup> She praised the way that the WOSL brought these women together again after the war. For women like Blanton who were raised in the shadow of the Civil War, the WOSL aided the ongoing process of national reconciliation.

The League tried to keep dues affordable so that women of all social and economic classes could join.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to the popular image of the women who served overseas as mostly being from wealthy upper-class backgrounds, many of these women actually came from lower-middle class backgrounds and worked as wage earners before the war; the WOSL wanted to remain accessible to them.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, many members did come from similar white, middle and upper class backgrounds. Perhaps their privileged upbringings enabled them to more easily devote their time to the WOSL after the war, while working class women may have had to return to jobs with less time to be involved with the WOSL.

Despite their intentions to be an inclusive organization, the WOSL racially segregated its membership. The WOSL’s Articles of Incorporation specifically stated that “colored women in each state shall form their own separate units.”<sup>86</sup> Zeiger estimates that three African-American women served in France as YMCA secretaries

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<sup>83</sup> “Incorporation of Women’s Overseas Service League Hearing,” 19.

<sup>84</sup> “Incorporation of Women’s Overseas Service League Hearing...” 6

<sup>85</sup> For a detailed analysis of the economic, social, racial, and religious backgrounds of overseas women workers in WWI see Zeiger, 26-50. She asserts that “despite the popular image of women at the front as “heiresses” using their wealth and influence to aid the cause, the majority of women who served with the AEF were in fact from the lower middle class,” 31.

<sup>86</sup> “Articles of Incorporation 1922-29, By laws,” pg. 6 section 2.



during the war; several dozen other Black women joined them after April 1919. No African-American nurses were permitted to serve overseas. Even though only a handful of African-American women served overseas, this policy of segregation still prevented African-American women from joining together equally alongside their white colleagues.<sup>87</sup> In keeping with the customs of Jim Crow America, the WOSL, like the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) during the war, did not believe that the service and sacrifices of African-Americans necessitated their equal treatment as citizens in the postwar social order.

Many WOSL members volunteered for wartime service because of their Progressive era involvement in volunteerism and reform work.<sup>88</sup> During the Progressive era, women expanded their traditional roles by becoming leaders and active participants in social work, settlement houses, and volunteer organizations such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army. At the same time, they pushed for the professionalization of these fields and pursued careers as paid employees. When the First World War began, many of these women transferred their leadership and skills to organizations that supported the war effort. Afterwards, many of these women joined the WOSL, connecting their Progressive era service work to their postwar commemorative activities and careers. Two such women were Rose Glass and Lena Hitchcock.

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<sup>87</sup> Zeiger, 27-28. See also Hunton and Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces*.

<sup>88</sup> For examples of women's service, reform, and welfare activities at the turn of the century see: Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House: A Community of Women Reformers;" Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935;" Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*.

Rose Glass organized the Seattle WOSL Unit and served as its Charter President. Highly educated like many other women active in the Progressive movement, she graduated from the University of Washington in 1904 and attended graduate school at Columbia University. She then worked in a New York City Settlement House before she volunteered with the YMCA as the entertainment director for the AEF in France.<sup>89</sup> After the war, Glass settled in Seattle where she worked as a teacher for forty years. She never married, and was supported in her old age by a trust fund established for her by a relative, evidence of her privileged background.<sup>90</sup> Influenced by Progressivism, Glass took her leadership roles seriously and devoted her life to her work as an educator and to supporting the Seattle WOSL Unit (figures 1.5 and 1.6).

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<sup>89</sup> *The Seattle Times* 10 April 1970, A6, Folder: News clippings and Information WOSL Seattle Unit, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1.5: WOSL Seattle Unit. Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.



Figure 1.6: WOSL Seattle Unit members on November 11, 1968. From left to right: Mrs. Edna Lord (ARC), Mrs. I.M. (Anna) Palmaw (ANC), Miss Rose Glass (YMCA), and Miss Blanche Wenner (YMCA). Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

Lena Hitchcock served as the WOSL National President from 1927 to 1929 and similarly devoted her life to her career and the advancement of women as civic leaders. As mentioned in the introduction, Hitchcock came from a privileged family involved with Republican politics, and she spent her youth as a volunteer and suffrage activist in Washington D.C. During the war, she served in France with one of the first groups of occupational therapist reconstruction aides attached to the Army Medical Corps.<sup>91</sup> As a pioneer in this field, when she returned home, she worked as a private occupational therapist in Washington D.C. before she helped establish the occupational therapy department at the city's Children's Hospital, where she served as the chairman from 1935 to 1952. She then helped lead the occupational therapy program at the Society of Crippled Children until 1967, all while remaining an active leader with the WOSL.<sup>92</sup> Hitchcock made helping others the focus of her career; she explained in a 1982 oral history that volunteering had been important to her throughout her life.<sup>93</sup> Women like Lena Hitchcock and Rose Glass, who came of age during the Progressive era, drew from their early experiences with transforming their volunteer service into their professional careers and understood veteranist-commemorations as complementary to their commitment to aiding others, acting as community leaders, and establishing successful careers.

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<sup>91</sup> Sillia, 291-220.

<sup>92</sup> "Anna Hitchcock, Former Therapist, Dies at Age 97," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.) 4 Nov. 1986, pg. B4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>93</sup> Lena Hitchcock oral history (03), 14 July 1982, recorded by the WOSL, UC –MS022/7 Lena Hitchcock: MS 22 Box 182, The Women's Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

### *Service as Commemoration*

The WOSL's veteranist-commemoration activities encompassed a wide variety of service projects and advocacy work. Service projects included any form of community service, volunteer work, fundraising, or philanthropy. Advocacy work included lobbying and advocating on behalf of male and female veterans, especially former overseas women who tried to gain government benefits.

As Americans built monuments that honored the war such as the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, the Chateau-Thierry Monument in France, and the many Doughboy statues across the U.S., the WOSL chose another course of action by preferring veteranist-commemorations.<sup>94</sup> According to WOSL organizational historian Helene M. Sillia, the WOSL felt that "any memorial to our women war-dead should be in this country rather than overseas and that it should take the form of living service to our own."<sup>95</sup> The WOSL repeated this mantra throughout the interwar period to justify their abstention from more traditional memorial projects. During the WOSL's annual national radio broadcast in 1937, service chairman Mrs. Nathaniel J. Steed reminded the WOSL of their motto: "the greatest memorial to the dead is service to the living."<sup>96</sup> On the front cover of the May 1923 edition of *Carry On*, they reprinted Edgar Guest's poem "Memorial Day," which promoted veteranist-commemorations. It said that the living must "Pledge ourselves as warriors true/Unto the work they died to do" and that:

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<sup>94</sup> See Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*.

<sup>95</sup> Sillia, 7-8.

<sup>96</sup> "Overseas Unit of D.C. Women Attends Party," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), Mar 1, 1937, pg. 12, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

The finest tribute we can pay  
Unto our hero dead to-day  
Is not of speech or roses red,  
But living, throbbing hearts instead,  
That shall renew the pledge they sealed  
With death upon the battlefield...<sup>97</sup>

The WOSL believed that by carrying on their service work after the war, they properly commemorated the wartime contributions of American men and women and helped to inscribe their experiences into the narrative of US participation in the World War.

The WOSL remained committed to veteranist-commemorations even during the Great Depression. In August 1933 issue of *Carry On*, National President Faustine Dennis reminded the WOSL of the increased importance of their service work during these trying times.<sup>98</sup> She told them they must “carry on our Service—this word that is to us the very breath of our League Life!”<sup>99</sup> Referring to the recent action taken at the convention to establish an emergency fund to help WOSL members in need of temporary aid due to the Great Depression, she explained that: “I cannot adequately express my happiness that through convention action another service to our women is at last made possible—financial assistance to those who, although not physically disabled, are no less in need of a helping hand over an economic crisis.”<sup>100</sup> The WOSL stepped in when the government did not and provided welfare and support to its needy members, no matter the cause. In doing so, they commemorated these

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<sup>97</sup> Edgar Guest, “Memorial Day,” *Carry On*, May 1923, Vol. II, No. 2, MS 22 Box 36, The Women’s Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

<sup>98</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XI, Aug. 1933, No. 3, pg. 23, Folder: 1933, Box “1933-1939,” *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13, 23.

women for their wartime service by providing them with assistance, as they did for their nation during the war.

The WOSL would last as an organization only as long as its members lived; eventually, the women who served in the First World War would die and the League would not be able to pursue its missions.<sup>101</sup> The life of the organization was only extended when the U.S. entered World War Two and the WOSL decided to open membership to the next generation of women who served overseas. By commemorating World War One through acts of service, WOSL members physically embodied the concept of a living memorial that existed only while they could carry on their service work. In fact, some WOSL units became memorials themselves when they chose a unit name that honored a local woman who died in wartime service or a recently deceased member of their unit.<sup>102</sup>

Despite their preference for veteranist-commemorations, the WOSL's mission did not prohibit or discourage traditional statuary memorials, but prioritized them below the central mission of serving veterans. The WOSL incorporated a variety of other commemorative activities and social events into their organization, many of which were fairly standard activities for a veteran's organization.<sup>103</sup> Local WOSL units participated in parades, memorial services, funerals, and social activities in addition to their service work. For example, on Memorial Day in 1925, members of

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<sup>101</sup> Incorporation of Women's Overseas Service League Hearing," 14.

<sup>102</sup> Sillia, 7.

<sup>103</sup> For example, on Armistice Day in 1924, the Toledo WOSL unit held a French dinner at a member's home that "was of a purely social nature, and was greatly enjoyed by all the members." Minute Book, Toledo Unit, c. 1920-1946, November 11, 1924 entry, Folder: W.O.S.L. Records Minute Book, Toledo Unit c.1920-1946 84.150.2, Box: W.O.S.L. RECORDS, Minute Books of Toledo, Ohio Unit, 2 vols., 84.150.2-.3, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

the Toledo, Ohio, WOSL unit marched in the local parade with some members in their old uniforms. Later that day, they attended the Memorial Day services at a Presbyterian Church.<sup>104</sup> The WOSL also had their own “Order of Service,” a document that outlined the program to be used at the WOSL memorial services held at each annual national convention to honor the women who lost their lives overseas during the war, as well as any recently deceased WOSL members.<sup>105</sup>

In their early years, the WOSL considered supporting some memorial projects that combined aspects of statuary memorials with service, such as the failed George Washington and Victory Memorial Building and the 1930 Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, discussed in chapter two. Begun in 1898 to memorialize George Washington in the nation’s capital, the George Washington Memorial Building faced a series of problems that prevented it from being completed.<sup>106</sup> In an attempt to revive the project, the mission of commemorating the victory in the World War was added and the project was reconceived as a victory building that would contain themed memorial rooms.<sup>107</sup> The WOSL was asked to purchase one of these rooms for use as its national headquarters and as a memorial to the women who died

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, May 6, 1925 entry.

<sup>105</sup> “Minutes of the Ninth Annual Convention, July 8-11, 1929 Minneapolis, Minnesota;” pg. 5, ; Folder: Ann. Convention Agendas, 1930-61, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.; Pamphlet “Memorial Service of the Thirty-Sixth National Convention Women’s Overseas Service League,” Unlabeled binder, Liberty Memorial Association Minute Book Collection, National WWI Museum.

<sup>106</sup> Letter, June 26, 1922 from Eben Putnam to Irene M. Givenwilson, Folder: Irene Givenwilson Cornell, 1921-3 Re: Women who died in service George Washington Memorial, Box: WOSL: Correspondence, 1924-62; Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4, WOSL Collection, National WWI Museum.

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Mrs. Henry F. Dimock to Irene M. Givenwilson, May 22, 1922, Folder: Irene Givenwilson Cornell, 1921-3 Re: Women who died in service George Washington Memorial, Box: WOSL: Correspondence, 1924-62; Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.



during their overseas service.<sup>108</sup> The WOSL briefly considered this offer in 1922, but asked the American Legion for their opinion first. The WOSL discovered that the George Washington Memorial Building had been a source of nationwide controversy and that the American Legion condemned the project.<sup>109</sup> The Legion explained to Irene M. Givenwilson, chairman of the WOSL Memorial Committee and an American Red Cross (ARC) leader, that they opposed the erection of any public building commemorating the World War until “proper and adequate legislation has been enacted for the relief of the disabled, first; the unemployed, second; and adjusted compensation.”<sup>110</sup> The American Legion agreed with the WOSL’s prioritization of service projects before the construction of monuments and encouraged the WOSL to reject the offer, which they did. This turned out to be a wise choice since the building was never completed and the project ended in embarrassment and disaster.<sup>111</sup>

The decision not to participate in the George Washington Memorial Building reflected the WOSL’s intensifying preference for veteranist-commemorations during the 1920s. In her 1923 report about this decision, Givenwilson concluded that the Memorial Committee believed that it was “far more important at the present time to increase our membership than to decide upon a permanent memorial, since we have

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Letter from Russell G. Creviston to Irene M. Givenwilson, June 23, 1922, Folder: Irene Givenwilson Cornell, 1921-3 Re: Women who died in service George Washington Memorial, Box: WOSL: Correspondence, 1924-62; Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Smithsonian Institution Archives, “SIA RU007474, George Washington Memorial Association, Records, 1890-1922,” *Smithsonian Institution Archives*, n.d. (26 December 2014) <[http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\\_arc\\_217624](http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_217624)>

enrolled to date only about 10% of the women who actually served overseas.”<sup>112</sup>

Increasing the WOSL membership took precedence over permanent memorials because the more women that became members, the more veterans the League could assist. The WOSL continued to reject offers to participate in physical memorials, such as in 1924 when they declined an invitation from a potential war mothers’ memorial with the explanation that their “particular care at present being disabled women.”<sup>113</sup> Starting in the WOSL’s early years, leaders of the League corresponded with other veterans’ organizations and rejected traditional memorial projects in favor of service work, their preferred form of commemoration.

The WOSL’s focus on veteranist-commemorations became so widely known that during their 1930 National Convention in Paris, the President of France, Gaston Doumergue, addressed the WOSL National President Mrs. Taubles and several other national officers at the Elysee Palace and praised the League for their well-known service work.<sup>114</sup> As published in *Carry On*, President Doumergue noted how the “women of your organization have done your share of service in time of war, but now, when womanhood has come into her own, there is still as great a service to render to the cause of peace, a constant service, that of bringing gradually continued peace on earth.”<sup>115</sup> Doumergue understood that by pursuing veteranist-commemorations, the WOSL aimed to make the world a better, more peaceful place.

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<sup>112</sup> “Report of the Chairman of the Memorial Committee, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923,” National WWI Museum; Box: WOSL: Correspondence, 1924-62; Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4; Folder: Irene Givenwilson Cornell, 1921-3 Re: Women who died in service George Washington Memorial.

<sup>113</sup> *Carry On*, Aug. 1924, Vol. III, No. 3, pg. 5, MS 22, Box 36, The Women’s Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

<sup>114</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. IX, Aug. 1930, No. 3, pg. 42, Folder: 1930, Box: 1922-1932, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

To conduct their agenda of veteranist-commemorations, the WOSL instituted service programs at the national and local unit levels. Service at the national level took place through two national standing committees devoted to the causes most valued by the league: the Service Committee and the Fund for Disabled Overseas Women Committee.<sup>116</sup> The Service Committee worked on the issues of “Rehabilitation; Hostess Service of the United States Army; Government and Soldiers’ Homes; Loans and Grants from the Fund for Disabled Overseas Women; and other service incidental to purposes of the League.”<sup>117</sup> The Fund for Overseas Disabled Women Committee focused solely on running this national fund that aided overseas women and constituted one of the WOSL’s most important ongoing projects.<sup>118</sup>

Following the lead of the national committees, local units devoted most of their time and resources to service activities. Local units often focused their service work on some of the main projects outlined by the national committees, such as raising money for the Fund for Disabled Overseas Women, Army hostess work, volunteering at veteran’s hospitals, and aiding other overseas women. No standard protocol existed for the local units to follow; units were free to choose the causes they wanted to support and service activities varied widely by unit. The activities of the local units were often published toward the end of each issue of *Carry On* in a section entitled “Unit Activities from Coast to Coast,” so that other units could be kept abreast of their colleague’s activities.

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<sup>116</sup> “By-laws of the Women’s Overseas Service League,” 10-11.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 10.

At all levels of the organization, the WOSL focused on three main categories of service that originated in the League's mission: service to former overseas women, service to male and female veterans, and advocacy that aided former overseas women and helped to include them in the war's historical narrative. With the onset of the Great Depression, the growing power of veteran politics, and the aging of male and female veterans, these categories of service became even more vital to the League and its platform of veteranist-commemorations.

*Helping Their Own: Service Towards Former Overseas Women*

The men who served in the American armed forces successfully gained some government veterans' benefits such as the Bonus, vocational rehabilitation training, and hospitalization benefits for those with service-related disabilities, while the majority of former overseas women remained ineligible for veteran status and government aid.<sup>119</sup> The WOSL did not leave these women to fend for themselves but helped their own members and other former overseas women. They prioritized service to these women, since they often had no other means of assistance. By aiding former overseas women, the WOSL commemorated their service and showed their appreciation for their sacrifices, even when the government did not.

Because so many overseas women served in voluntary organizations and not in "official" government service, these women received no government benefits. An undated document about the League's history explained that although the women who served overseas outside the official government apparatus "had shared the

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<sup>119</sup> For more information on the benefits World War veterans received see: Ortiz, 13-31.

hardships of the armed forces and many came home with impaired health, only the Army and Navy nurses were entitled to government compensation. None of the welfare organizations made any provision for their disabled workers after the war. Even the Red Cross nurses who served in Army hospitals were not eligible for aid from any source.”<sup>120</sup> Although these women had supported the American armed forces, because they did not officially serve in the military, they were shut out of all government veterans’ benefits. This became an extremely contentious issue that the WOSL worked to overturn by spearheading several initiatives to provide their own social welfare to former overseas women who lacked government benefits.

The WOSL established the Fund for Disabled Overseas Women to provide loans and financial aid to any disabled, ill, or economically unstable former overseas woman. This fund became especially important during the Great Depression since it provided economic support to women who had nowhere else to turn. The fund had been created through a resolution passed at the 1923 national convention; each member was asked to contribute one dollar to the fund every year and WOSL units raised additional money to establish and support the fund.<sup>121</sup> It was intended to “serve as an emergency fund for any unit which may be unable to care for some case arising in its territory and also to serve as a fund for worthy cases of disabled ex-service women who may need help and who are too distant from any unit to make it practical for that unit to help.”<sup>122</sup> Grants were also issued to women who could not repay a

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<sup>120</sup> Undated typed history of the WOSL, Folder: WOSL History Project, Box: WOSL-National, History Projects, Service Projects, Rosters, 2, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

loan; in fact, the term loan was used even when repayment seemed unlikely in order to provide encouragement to the recipient, or to persuade some women to accept money they might have refused if they thought it was charity.<sup>123</sup>

The WOSL established a national committee to handle the fund, and during the national convention held in San Francisco in July 1924, the committee's chairman, Mrs. Eugene K. Sturgis, outlined the three resolutions from the 1923 convention that had created the League's policies on disabled ex-service women.<sup>124</sup> First, the WOSL resolved to undertake "a definite and comprehensive program" to alleviate "the suffering now existing among disabled ex-service women and that this program be continued for as long a period as there shall be any disabled ex-service women who are in need of help."<sup>125</sup> Second, they would take on the care of all "disabled ex-service women, who, for some technical reason, are debarred from receiving aid from the U.S. Government or from a welfare organization, and also of those women whose disability may not be directly traceable to their service overseas."<sup>126</sup> Third, they pledged to try to secure under the new Veteran's Bureau, "a national home and hospital for disabled and sick ex-service women, which shall be open to ex-service women exclusively, upon the same terms that such national homes maintained by the U.S. Government are open to men."<sup>127</sup> Mrs. Sturgis highlighted how her committee

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<sup>123</sup> "Bulletin as Voted by the Eleventh Annual Convention of the Women's Overseas Service League," pg. 2, Unlabeled folder, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>124</sup> "Proceedings of Fourth Annual Convention of the Women's Overseas Service League held at San Francisco, California, July 14-16, 1924," pg. 90-91, Folder: WOSL Transcript Fourth National Convention 1924, San Francisco, Part 1 p1-125, Box: Women's Overseas Service League: Reports, Ann. Natl. Conventions, 1921-25 (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) Box 7, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 91-92.

had already been successful with some of these goals and felt “tempered by enthusiasm and a fine recognition of the joy which comes in serving one’s own disabled comrades.”<sup>128</sup> But even as she lauded these accomplishments, Mrs. Sturgis emphasized that many women needed assistance in proving their claims to the Veterans’ Bureau.<sup>129</sup> In order to assist these women and learn more about their needs, around 1924 the WOSL sent out 12,000 questionnaires to the WOSL and other former overseas women that asked about disabled women’s needs in the hopes of identifying struggling disabled women and learning about what assistance they required.<sup>130</sup> These questionnaires helped the WOSL to get a better idea of the most common and pressing issues faced by disabled overseas women. They enabled the League to help more women outside of their organization and to also recruit new members who could benefit from their support.

Local WOSL units constantly worked to raise money to donate to the fund. The May 1927 edition of *Carry On* contained a short article from the National Service Chairman that updated the League about local units’ contributions to the fund.<sup>131</sup> Titled “Does This Look as Though the W.O.S.L. Had Forgotten?” it listed the contributions recorded by twelve different WOSL units, with donations ranging from \$10 from Mississippi to \$100 from San Francisco.<sup>132</sup> Some units raised money for the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 90-91.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 96-97.

<sup>131</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. VI, No. 2, May 1927, pg. 15, Folder: 1927, Box 1922-1932, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

fund in very creative ways, such as a unit in New York that raised \$2000 through a benefit performance of a play written by member Mrs. August Belmont.<sup>133</sup>

WOSL members and local units used *Carry On* to promote campaigns for the fund that members could participate in nationwide. The Omaha Unit sponsored a trip to Paris, France to benefit the fund and advertised it on the back cover of the February 1928 edition of *Carry On*.<sup>134</sup> In another example of imaginative fundraising, in 1931, the WOSL national leadership urged members to participate in a new project called “The Christmas Card Club.”<sup>135</sup> In lieu of sending fellow members Christmas cards, members would donate the money they normally spent on cards to the fund.<sup>136</sup> WOSL leaders urged members to participate and asserted that “the League has it in *its own power*, through a little self-sacrifice, to increase our National Disabled Fund very materially each year.”<sup>137</sup> This same issue of *Carry On* also suggested that members could continue another holiday tradition of taking out “Christmas Greeting” advertisements in the magazine in exchange for a donation to the fund as another way to send holiday wishes to distant friends and support the fund.<sup>138</sup> These female World War One veterans urged members to forego the unnecessary expenses of friendship and use their money to support the fund.

Geographically distant units even worked together to augment the fund. After the WOSL held their 1930 national convention in Paris, the Boston and Detroit Units

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<sup>133</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. III, May 1924, No 2, pg. 23, Folder: 1924, Box 1922-1932, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>134</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. VII, No. 1, Feb. 1928, back cover, Folder: 1928, Box 1922-1932, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>135</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. X, No. 1, February 1931, pg. 9, Folder: 1931, Box 1922-1932, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.



donated a movie that showcased the convention to raise money for the fund.<sup>139</sup> The movie would be lent to local units to screen for an admission fee which would then be donated to the fund.<sup>140</sup> The Boston and Detroit Units hoped that the film would raise money for the fund, promote and advertise the WOSL, and “serve as a permanent record of great historic interest, not only to every member of the League, but to all who hold sacred the memories of what our service overseas stood for.”<sup>141</sup> This movie fundraiser allowed WOSL units to publicly commemorate their own wartime service and the League while they raised money for one of their most important service projects. Such creative projects helped connect and combine commemoration and service.

The fund also benefited from the philanthropy of Sallie McIntosh Clark, a WOSL member who served with the American Red Cross, and who, in her 1932 will, created a trust that enabled the WOSL to help disabled former overseas women. Upon her death, a trust fund of \$50,000 was to be transferred to the WOSL for this purpose for as long the WOSL needed.<sup>142</sup> At some point, the WOSL might disband due to the age or death of most of its members. The trust would then be given to the American Red Cross; this transfer occurred in January 2001, shortly after the death of the last WOSL member from World War One.<sup>143</sup> This large donation bolstered the fund and

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<sup>139</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XI, No. 3, August 1930, pg. 41, Folder: 1930, Box 1922-1932, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Letter from W.J. Bardsley to Shirley Farr, October 17, 1932, Folder: Correspondence, 1931033 re: Sallie M. Clark Bequest (for disabled ex-service women) F 10, Box: WOSL, Rosters of women who served & died, awards, ways and means reports, correspondence, Box 3, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.; Biography of Sallie McIntosh Clark, undated, MS 22 Box 5, The Women’s Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

<sup>143</sup> Biography of Sallie McIntosh Clark.

helped ensure that in later years when more WOSL members were aged and infirm, the fund they worked so hard to maintain would be available to help them.

The WOSL also supported the few former overseas women who did receive some government aid, especially the disabled women allowed into two government hospitals after the WOSL's lobbying efforts succeeded in obtaining this benefit for them.<sup>144</sup> Women who officially served in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps could reside at a home established at Danville, Illinois, and in a special wing of a tuberculosis hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.<sup>145</sup> The national WOSL and many local units aided the Danville home from its inception, but the Danville facility did not sufficiently meet the needs of its female residents, and in March 1931 the women were moved to the Soldier's Home in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>146</sup> At Dayton, those women who were in worse health lived in a hospital annex, while the healthier women stayed in a former hotel known as the Miller Cottage (figure 1.7).<sup>147</sup> This move allowed each woman to have her own room and to travel into town by trolley car, something impossible at the more isolated Danville location.<sup>148</sup> The WOSL President at the time, Mrs. G.H. Taubles, believed that the move was "encouraging...for it shows us that

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<sup>144</sup> Zeiger, 170.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Letter from Mrs. G.H. Taubles to All Units, February 16, 1931, Folder: Shirley Farr Correspondence, 1924-55, Box: WOSL Correspondence, 1924-62, Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. For more about the Soldiers Home in Dayton, see: Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900*.

<sup>147</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XII, Feb 1933, No. 1, pg. 13-15, Folder 1933, Box: 1933-1939, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection. It seems that women moved again to a different building again in March 1938. *Carry On*, Vol. XVII, Nov. 1938, No. 4, pg. 10, Folder: 1938, Box: 1933-1939.

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Mrs. G.H. Taubles to All Units, February 16, 1931.

the Government is mindful of these women and a better, bigger Home will be found as the need arises.”<sup>149</sup>



Figure 1.7: Miller Cottage, Dayton Home. *Carry On* Vol. XIV, November 1935, No. 4, pg. 7. Women’s Memorial Foundation, Women’s Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.

A WOSL chairman was appointed to organize service projects that helped the women at the Dayton home.<sup>150</sup> These projects included subscribing to magazines for the residents, sending puzzles and amusements, and providing materials for them to make and sell hooked rugs and knitted items to earn pocket money.<sup>151</sup> The WOSL also began an adoption program in which local units were encouraged to “adopt” women at the Dayton home who came from their geographic area and “by means of letters, remembrances, and personal interest re-establish the bonds of normal companionship which institutional life tends to destroy.”<sup>152</sup> Although the WOSL was

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XII, Feb 1933, No. 1, pg. 15.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid; *Carry On*, Vol. XIV, Nov. 1935, No 4 pg. 6-7.

<sup>152</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XIII, May 1934, No. 2, pg. 21-22.

not in charge of the Dayton home, they supported it and aimed to “distribute the interest and activities of the League in a way that will bring a more personal touch into our relations with the Dayton Service Women.”<sup>153</sup> The WOSL recognized that the government’s inclusion of women at these institutions represented a victory in the fight to get overseas women some government benefits. By supporting the government’s efforts at the Dayton home, the WOSL showed their appreciation to the government even as they continued to advocate to obtain further government benefits for former overseas women.

Through their support of these homes and the Fund for Disabled Overseas Women, the WOSL created memorials constructed from human actions in place of stone. The service of the WOSL members at these homes transformed them into living memorials that commemorated the war by supporting the female veterans who lived there. The memory of the war became embodied in the war’s survivors, both the veterans who needed help and those who provided it.

#### *Helping Their Boys: WOSL Service Towards Male Veterans*

The WOSL also devoted many of their veteranist-commemoration activities to helping male veterans. Since so many former overseas women had supported “the boys” during the war, they felt it was their duty to continue helping them afterwards. In 1922, National Service Committee Chairman Anne Hoyt wrote to the American Red Cross (ARC) to determine how the WOSL could best assist their work. She told the ARC’s Chairman, Judge Payne, that although the WOSL supported all of the

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

ARC's work, they felt that "our program should concentrate on the one line of service to the Ex-Service man, that being the thing for which by training, experience and understanding, the Overseas women are most especially fitted."<sup>154</sup> Hoyt asked Judge Payne if the ARC would accept the WOSL's offer of being its "especial—though of course not exclusive—agency to call on at need for any backing, supplementing or extending of its work for the Ex-Service man."<sup>155</sup> The WOSL wanted to assist these men because they felt that "we have something that no other worker for him can have—that our grounded knowledge of him, our underlying admiration makes for a patience that cannot tire,--and that the bond of common memories, or his sense of our understanding, enables us to help him without his experiencing any sting or feeling of demoralization."<sup>156</sup> Having intimately aided these men during the war, the WOSL understood their postwar service to veterans as a way to continue their wartime duties.

Local units took this mission to heart and constantly aided male veterans. In 1927 the New England and Boston WOSL Units contributed a donation to the U.S. Blind Veterans' Musicale Company, an orchestra composed of blind veterans who performed concerts to raise money for their fellow blind veterans.<sup>157</sup> During Christmas in 1924, a group of women from the New York WOSL units visited the U.S. Veterans' Hospital No. 98 at Castle Point, New York.<sup>158</sup> They spent time with

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<sup>154</sup> Letter to Judge Payne from Anne Hoyt, October 6, 1922, Folder: Irene Givenwilson Cornell, 1921-3 Re: Women who died in service George Washington Memorial, Box: WOSL: Correspondence, 1924-62; Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. VI, No. 2, May 1927, pg. 39-40, Folder: 1927, Box 1922-1932.

<sup>158</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. V, No. 1, Feb. 1925, pg. 10-12, 53, Folder 1925, Box 1922-1932.

the patients, observed the work of the hospital, and celebrated Christmas. They also sent Christmas boxes to the patients at Castle Point and two other hospitals in the region.<sup>159</sup> WOSL units all across the country conducted similar service work to help male veterans, especially those who were disabled or hospitalized.

The WOSL's female World War One veterans also pursued service projects that helped the "welfare of the Army and Navy," as denoted in their mission.<sup>160</sup> The WOSL actively supported the summer Citizens' Military Training Camps (CMTC) run by the Government and the War Department to provide voluntary military training to young civilian men.<sup>161</sup> They encouraged members to volunteer as Army hostesses who provided facilities for the men to visit with their mothers and other women while they relaxed in a chaste environment. These hostess houses were modeled after similar facilities constructed at stateside bases during the war.<sup>162</sup> Eager to show their continued support for service members, this hostess service allowed the WOSL to reiterate their dedication to military service and national preparedness and enabled them to create space for women in these male dominated military landscapes, even if they could only do so through female occupations like hostess work.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> "Articles of Incorporation, 1922-29," pg. 4.

<sup>161</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. III, May 1924, No. 2, pg. 10, Folder 1924, Box 1922-1932.

<sup>162</sup> Report on the Ninth Annual Convention—Women's Overseas Service League Held at Minneapolis--July 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 1929 Presented by Beatrice G. Lesser, Delegate, At the Annual Luncheon at the Union League Club, Sept. 28, 1929; pg. 2, Unlabeled Folder; "Transcript Fourth National Convention 1924." pg. 106-109, Folder: WOSL Transcript Fourth National Convention 1924, San Francisco, Part 1, Box: Women's Overseas Service League: Reports, Ann. Natl. Conventions, 1921-25 (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) Box 7. Both from: Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. For more on WWI hostess houses see: Cynthia Brandimarte, "Women on the Home Front: Hostess Houses during World War I," Vol. 42, No. 4 (Winter 2008): 201-222. For more on the CMTC see: Donald M. Kington, *Forgotten Summers: The Story of the Citizens' Military Training Camps, 1921-1940* (Two Decades Publishing: San Francisco, CA, 1995).

The WOSL's support also extended to the male veterans who served as cemetery superintendents at the overseas American cemeteries established by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). The Toledo, Ohio unit sent the superintendents of the Meuse-Argonne and Oise-Aisne American Cemeteries subscriptions to *The Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>163</sup> By supporting these cemetery superintendents, the WOSL used acts of service to honor the Americans buried in these cemeteries as well as the veterans who cared for their graves.

#### *Advocacy for Former Overseas Women*

As another part of their efforts to commemorate the war through community service, the WOSL advocated on behalf of former overseas women. While many male veterans benefited from the support and political power of organizations such as the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the WOSL quickly realized that they would have to advocate for themselves if they desired similar results. The WOSL served as the voice of former overseas women and tried to secure government benefits based on their wartime service.

The WOSL believed that their overseas wartime service entitled them to the benefits of what historians have called "martial citizenship."<sup>164</sup> By conducting work that the WOSL defined as military service, even if they were civilians and not officially in the military, they believed they deserved the same special rights and

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<sup>163</sup> Minute Book, Toledo Unit, February 9, 1927 entry.

<sup>164</sup> Zeiger, 171; Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veteran's Welfare State, 1860-1900*, 2-5.

benefits given to male military veterans. They asserted that they earned these rights by fulfilling the duties of martial citizenship through their overseas service, and they returned home “with the conviction that they had by it been set apart.”<sup>165</sup>

The government did not completely agree, and the WOSL grappled with the government’s refusal to grant veteran status to many women who served overseas. Only women who officially served as members of the military could be considered for veteran’s benefits.<sup>166</sup> Women who served in one of the many voluntary organizations overseas were considered civilians and were ineligible for veterans’ benefits, even though they often worked for, with, and among the military.<sup>167</sup> As a result, many members of the WOSL received no benefits or care from the government after the war, despite any injuries, ailments, or mental afflictions they might have suffered as a result of their wartime service. This prompted the WOSL’s commitment to providing these women with the assistance refused by the government.

Even the women who officially served in the military struggled to gain recognition for their service and obtain veterans’ benefits. During the war, Army and Navy nurses served in an undefined status without official rank; they were neither enlisted nor officers and they were not entitled to exercise authority over the men under their care.<sup>168</sup> Army nurses succeeded in gaining relative rank from Congress in June 1920, but Navy nurses did not receive this status because the Navy deemed it

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<sup>165</sup> Sillia, 2.

<sup>166</sup> Ebbert and Hall, *The First, the Few, the Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*, 97.

<sup>167</sup> Zeiger, 170-171.

<sup>168</sup> Susan H. Godson, *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 70-71, 76-77; Zeiger, 109-115.



superfluous.<sup>169</sup> The Yeoman (F) and the women Marines, the first American women to serve as enlisted members of the U.S. armed forces, were the only women to be included as veterans without a fight. However, they too often struggled to receive care, and the Navy soon barred women from future enlistments through the Naval Reserve Act of 1925.<sup>170</sup> Although the minority of women who did officially serve in the military were in a better position than most former overseas women, they still faced challenges in receiving their benefits, especially when it came to health care and hospitals which were not equipped to care for women.<sup>171</sup>

The WOSL formed a National Legislative Committee to formally advocate for legislation that would benefit former overseas women, especially those who did not officially serve in the military. This committee collected information about legislation relevant to the League, suggested legislation to support that was in line with their goals, and recommended proposals for legislation which would further their interests.<sup>172</sup> During her term as Legislative Committee Chairman, Mrs. Faustine Dennis updated the WOSL about her committee's work in the April 1932 issue of *Carry On*. She described their efforts to persuade Congressman James Fitzpatrick (D, NY) of the House of Representatives' Military Affairs Committee, and World War One veteran Senator Hiram Bingham III (R-CT), to consider the proposed bills which would give government hospitalization benefits to all women who served overseas

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<sup>169</sup> Godson, 77; Zeiger, 168-169. According to Godson, the Navy Surgeon General Edward R. Stitt asserted that Navy nurses were already treated as officers administratively and he believed their "noble calling" already placed them on a higher plan than rank would.

<sup>170</sup> Ebbert and Hall, 97-109; Zeiger, 169.

<sup>171</sup> Ebbert and Hall, 103-108.

<sup>172</sup> By-laws of the Women's Overseas Service League," 10

with the Army but were not in military service.<sup>173</sup> Dennis intended to advocate for these women and testify before Congressional committees if needed.<sup>174</sup> She described how she had been asked whether the WOSL should continue to press for this legislation during the troubling times of the Great Depression.<sup>175</sup> Unequivocally she answered yes, and argued that “illness and death wait on no man and on no depression. If these sick women are to be cared for and returned to health, or helped until the day when all human efforts cease to matter, we must keep on unwaveringly until government hospitalization is gained for them.”<sup>176</sup> Even though she would not benefit herself since she served under the ARC and not directly under the military, she and her committee were “happy to do our utmost to help these sisters of ours.”<sup>177</sup>

Despite the WOSL’s annual efforts to promote this legislation, that same year, 1932, Dennis and the WOSL reversed course and withdrew this legislation and other bills that sought benefits for overseas women.<sup>178</sup> They decided to comply with “the pleas of the U.S. President for an economy program” in an act of patriotic cooperation during the Great Depression.<sup>179</sup> In 1933 they even went “on record as approving the President’s economy program” that was part of the New Deal and they did not reactivate the efforts of the Legislation Committee to lobby for overseas women’s

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<sup>173</sup> Zeiger, 170; *Carry On*, Vol. XI, No 2, May 1932, pg. 14-15, Folder: 1932, Box: 1922-1932, Women’s Memorial Foundation, *Carry On* periodical Collection; “Fitzpatrick, James Martin,” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, n.d. <<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=F000175>> (28 December 2014); “Bingham, Hiram,” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, n.d. <<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000470>> (28 December 2014).

<sup>174</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XI, No 2, May 1932, 14-15.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>178</sup> Zeiger, 170-171; Sillia, 10.

<sup>179</sup> Sillia, 10; Zeiger, 171.

benefits until 1939, after the worst of the Depression ended.<sup>180</sup> These decisions demonstrated that the WOSL supported FDR and agreed with his conception of the New Deal as a type of emergency war measure that necessitated sacrifices from the citizenry.<sup>181</sup>

The WOSL took similar actions in line with the New Deal regarding the Bonus, the retroactive financial compensation originally planned to be given to First World War veterans in 1945.<sup>182</sup> In her 1932 report about the Legislative Committee's efforts lobbying for hospitalization benefits, Dennis expressed her opposition to the immediate payment of the Bonus. She explained how "were it a matter of a bonus, your chairman personally would feel that we should wait until a later time."<sup>183</sup> At the 1933 National Convention when Dennis was elected National President, the WOSL publicly announced their opposition to the immediate payment of the Bonus to overseas women, another indication that they supported FDR's conception of the fight against the Great Depression as a war that took priority over other matters. *The New York Times* reported on July 6, 1933, that the WOSL "closed its convention today with a declaration against payment of any bonus to women who served abroad during the World War. Leaders said several attempts had been made to have Congress provide compensation for nurses, welfare workers and others who saw overseas service."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Sillia, 10.

<sup>181</sup> For more on how FDR used the analogy of war to promote the New Deal see: Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 15-26.

<sup>182</sup> Ortiz, 24-25.

<sup>183</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XI, No 2, May 1932, pg. 14-15.

<sup>184</sup> "A.E.F. Women Oppose Taking Bonus," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), July 7, 1933, pg. 9.

These decisions placed the WOSL squarely in support of FDR's New Deal economic recovery efforts that prioritized national needs and the 'war' against the Great Depression over veterans' demands, especially the immediate payment of the Bonus. As early as his 1932 presidential campaign, Roosevelt opposed the immediate payment of the Bonus when there were so many other pressing economic issues to solve.<sup>185</sup> He viewed veterans as a minority group no more entitled to such relief than other struggling Americans.<sup>186</sup> Once elected as President, FDR continued to oppose the immediate payment of the Bonus and enacted legislation that reduced exiting veterans' benefits.<sup>187</sup> As part of his "Hundred Days" legislation early in his first term, the "Bill to Maintain the Credit of the United States Government," known as The Economy Act, reduced veterans' benefits and pensions by \$460 million, sparking what one historian described as "a rapid political mobilization by military veterans against New Deal policy."<sup>188</sup> By supporting the President's "economy program" in 1933, the WOSL endorsed The Economy Act and its reductions of veterans' benefits. They put their support behind FDR and his New Deal effort to combat the Great Depression, just as they did when they paused their legislative efforts.

The WOSL's cooperation with FDR's administration makes sense given their close ties with the American Legion. During the early years of the New Deal, the American Legion attempted to cooperate with FDR, while the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) took a more confrontational stance with FDR and joined what one scholar called the "New Deal Dissidents" to continue the fight for immediate payment

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<sup>185</sup> Ortiz, 58-59.

<sup>186</sup> Ortiz, 58-59.

<sup>187</sup> Ortiz, 66.

<sup>188</sup> Ortiz, 66.

of the Bonus and expanded veterans' benefits.<sup>189</sup> The WOSL's closer alignment with the American Legion might have influenced their decision to support FDR and his New Deal efforts to stabilize the economy, even if some of these measures reduced veterans' benefits.<sup>190</sup> The WOSL opted to temporarily sacrifice some of their goals in order to support the President's emergency measures to restore the American economy.

The WOSL's support of the New Deal and their ties with the American Legion could help explain their relative silence about the 1932 Bonus March. During the 1932 WOSL National Convention in Los Angeles from July 4 to 7, held during the Bonus March, the WOSL adopted a resolution to address the events happening in Washington D.C.<sup>191</sup> This resolution reaffirmed the WOSL's obligation and allegiance to the government. It resolved for the WOSL to "recommend to the several Units the desirability of forming a plan to work through the coming year with veterans and to encourage their full cooperation with the Government during its difficult period of financial adjustment."<sup>192</sup> As the Bonus March divided veteran's organizations, this moderate statement suggested that the WOSL may have tried to remain neutral about the issue, much like the American Legion, who declined to take sides about the Bonus March in its official magazine.<sup>193</sup> This may account for the absence of a discussion about the Bonus March or the immediate payment of the Bonus in *Carry On*. Taking

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<sup>189</sup> Ortiz, 66-67, 98,

<sup>190</sup> The WOSL did cooperate with the VFW but seems to have had a stronger alliance with the American Legion.

<sup>191</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XI, No 2, May 1932, pg. 26.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>193</sup> Ortiz, 32-33, 60-63. Ortiz provides an in-depth discussion and timeline of the VFW and American Legion's involvement with and reactions to the Bonus March.

sides might have hindered the WOSL's service projects and their advocacy for women veterans; rather, they stayed focused on their mission and asserted their willingness to cooperate productively with both veterans and the government. Although they supported the concept of the Bonus, they did not believe that immediate payment of the Bonus was the right course at this point in the Depression.<sup>194</sup>

The immediate payment of the Bonus did not solve many of the issues that the WOSL cared the most about; it would only provide temporary assistance to male veterans and a few female veterans. The WOSL wanted long-term benefits and recognition for all veterans, especially women, not just a temporary influx of cash as a short-term solution. They worried more about the lasting problems that affected veterans; for women without government benefits, addressing those problems was a constant struggle. Faustine Dennis emphasized this difference in her 1932 article when she clarified why she supported the bill for hospitalization benefits but not immediate payment of the Bonus. She explained that "the whole emphasis of this bill, in my mind, is the physical suffering of women, who deserve this care from the government they served."<sup>195</sup> Indeed, WOSL member First Lady Lou Henry Hoover and President Hoover privately donated food, clothing, and other necessities to veterans who participated in the Bonus March, even as they publicly opposed the

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<sup>194</sup> For more about women's involvement with the New Deal see: Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*, Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982); and Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>195</sup> Women's Memorial Foundation, *Carry On* periodical Collection; Box: *Carry On* 1922-1932, Folder 1932; *Carry On*, Vol. XI, No 2, May 1932, pg. 14-15.

immediate payment of the bonus and the Bonus March.<sup>196</sup> The Bonus served as the easy solution to veterans' problems, while the WOSL's commemorative service platform pushed for a harder, but more comprehensive plan that gave all those who served the care they deserved. The WOSL believed such a course was the best way to commemorate the Americans who served in the war.

### *Preserving the History of Overseas Women*

Alongside their focus on service, and in keeping with the object of their organization, the WOSL worked to "to keep alive and develop the spirit that prompted overseas service."<sup>197</sup> This part of their mission constituted a key part of their agenda of veteranist-commemorations. By attempting to keep the spirit of their overseas service alive, the WOSL both commemorated women's overseas service and staked their claim in the commemorative narrative of the war.

The WOSL instituted a history project to document their war work for posterity. This history project consisted of questionnaire forms that they sent out to WOSL members, with the intention that each member would return the completed form and include an informal narrative that described her service. The questionnaire forms asked for standard biographical data such as the organization they worked with, the location of their overseas work and any decorations they earned.<sup>198</sup> By May 1930,

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<sup>196</sup> Nancy Beck Young, *Lou Henry Hoover: Activist First Lady* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 157.

<sup>197</sup> "Articles of Incorporation," pg. 4.

<sup>198</sup> Questionnaires of Lucile K. Moore and Ellen Sterling Bacorn, Folder: Zada Daniels Papers Autobiographical information on WWI women veterans, inc. citation, Box: WOSL: Correspondence, 1924-62, Congressional bills, 1929-1951, Box 4, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

WOSL National Historian Shirley Farr had received questionnaires from 1,115 women, narratives from 365 women, and both a questionnaire and a narrative from 1,228 women.<sup>199</sup> She urged members to submit their questionnaires, especially their narratives, which she explained were necessary “if anyone is to ever turn these bits of personal experience into a mosaic which will picture what American women did overseas during the Great War.”<sup>200</sup>

Farr emphasized the importance of including every WOSL member’s story in the collective history of their wartime experiences. “May I urge anew,” she wrote, “that no one will think: “Oh, what I did wasn’t important.” Please write and send in the account of what you did, and let someone else without personal bias judge what its value is for the general picture.”<sup>201</sup> Farr wrote with impressive foresight about the importance of collecting the stories of women’s overseas service before they were lost. She recognized that these records would be valuable to future historians who would write their history; these documents would ensure that their stories became part of the narrative of American participation in the First World War. By spearheading this history project, the WOSL performed an act of service that helped to recognize, honor, and commemorate women alongside men so that they would not be forgotten.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. For more on women’s oral histories see: J. E. Smyth, “The Long Road of Women’s Memory: Fred Zinneman’s *Julia*,” in *Hollywood and the American Historical Film*, ed. J.E. Smyth (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); 165-182.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> In July of 1978, WOSL National Historian Helene M. Sillia published *Lest We Forget: A History of the Women’s Overseas Service League*. The WOSL donated much of their original material to the University of Texas, San Antonio where it forms the Women’s Overseas Service League Records today.



The WOSL also staked their claim in the commemorative narrative by encouraging members to wear their wartime uniforms when they publicly represented the League, especially at their national conventions. An announcement in the May 1931 issue of *Carry On* reminded readers that “everyone is urged to make an effort to take her uniform to convention. The wearing of the uniform adds very much to the impressiveness of the Memorial Service.”<sup>203</sup> At the 1933 National Convention, the WOSL unanimously adopted a resolution “that the regulation uniforms prescribed and worn during active service be adopted as the official uniforms” of the WOSL since they were “the only ones which could possibly carry any significance to the League.”<sup>204</sup> Wearing uniforms visually demonstrated the diverse ways that women participated in the war effort overseas. The uniforms also visually connected women’s service to the military. Even though many women served in civilian organizations, by wearing a uniform they interpreted their work as military service, albeit outside the official military apparatus. As chapter five demonstrates, uniforms formed an important way that American women commemorated their wartime service and sought inclusion in military commemoration and culture. By choosing to continue wearing their uniforms, the WOSL women reminded the public of their service to the military from within and outside of its ranks, and commemorated their participation in the war through a visual reminder of their contributions.

Despite their best efforts, women’s overseas service in World War One began to fade from public memory by the Second World War. In August 1942, former WOSL

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<sup>203</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. X, No. 2. May 1931, Pg. 42, Folder 1931, Box: 1922-1932.

<sup>204</sup> *Carry On* Vol. XII, August 1933, No. 3, pg. 13, Folder 1933, Box: 1933-1939.

National President Lena Hitchcock wrote a heated public letter to *The Washington Post* that criticized the newspaper for inaccurately writing that the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was the first group of uniformed American military women to serve overseas. Hitchcock's letter corrected this mistake and provided a brief history of women's overseas service in the Great War, and their postwar efforts to gain government benefits. She concluded by saying that she and her comrades wanted to "pass the torch we once held to the keeping of the young women of today. We wish them God speed, honor in their great endeavor, and when their work is done, a safe return."<sup>205</sup> Through WOSL member Representative Edith Nourse Rogers's legislation that created the WAAC, the WOSL ensured that this next generation of American women in military service would gain better recognition and benefits than they had themselves.

### *Conclusion*

The Women's Overseas Service League defined community service and advocacy as a form of commemoration to which they devoted themselves throughout the interwar period. Through their veteranist-commemorations, they supported, aided, and advocated for former overseas women and male veterans. Simultaneously, they attempted to include the story of overseas women in the historical and commemorative narrative of the First World War so that their wartime contributions

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<sup>205</sup> Lena Hitchcock, "Before We Had The WAACS," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), Aug 31, 1942, pg. 8, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

would not be forgotten. They reminded the nation that they too had served and fulfilled the duties of martial citizenship. Although the memory of their service quickly faded from public memory, the WOSL hoped that their pioneering service overseas and their postwar commitment to the nation would create more opportunities for women to support and serve in the military in the future, as occurred during the Second World War. In the meantime, they used the WOSL to maintain a foothold in veterans' affairs, national defense, and military commemoration.

By eschewing most traditional memorial projects and focusing on service, the WOSL commemorated the past by looking toward the future. Having experienced the war firsthand, these women returned home with a different perspective about commemoration. They believed that continuing their own service constituted the most appropriate memorial to the war they participated in. As they matured as an organization, the WOSL became even more devoted to this belief and they declined to participate in the American Red Cross's Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, the biggest physical memorial project that honored American women's service in the war. Even though the Memorial Building combined service with traditional commemoration, this compromise was not focused enough on service for the WOSL, who by the 1930s, formed the core of the avant-garde group of women who promoted veteranist-commemorations.

## **Chapter 2: Service Inscribed in Stone: The Attempted Compromise Between Service and Statue at the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War**

In the heart of downtown Washington D.C., just blocks from the White House, an elegant neo-classical marble building occupies 1755 E Street Northwest. Set back from the street and flanked by overgrown shrubbery, to passersby it might appear to be just another grand government building adorned with columns. But those who pause for a closer look will see the inscription: “In Memory of the Heroic Women of the World War” (figure 2.1).



Figure 2.1: Front façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. The inscription above the columns reads: “In Memory of the Heroic Women of the World War.” August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, as the building is known, characterized the overlap between women's attempts to pursue veteranist-commemorations and to erect statuary memorials. Built by an influential group of female leaders at the headquarters of the American National Red Cross (ARC), this Memorial Building embodies the interwar debates between female veteranist-commemorators regarding the best way to memorialize the war and women's contributions to it.<sup>206</sup> Through this Memorial Building, the women of the ARC tried to find a compromise between a traditional physical memorial and service to the living. Their choice underscored that veteranist-commemorations did not completely overtake traditional memorials. At the same time, the WOSL believed the ARC's attempted compromise did not focus enough on service and they viewed it as a failure.

By specifically memorializing women's wartime services, this Memorial Building pushed for the inclusion of women in the narrative of the American memory of the Great War. When individual elements of the building were used to commemorate specific individuals and groups of women, the Memorial Building became a commemorative site that encompassed the variety of women's contributions to the war. The building aspired to become the epicenter of the female memory of the war, a location where women's wartime contributions gained first-class status in the commemorative landscape. As a structure that aimed to facilitate women's postwar

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<sup>206</sup> The American Red Cross has undergone several name and acronym changes throughout its existence. Whitney Hopkins and Susan Watson of the Historical Programs and Collections Department at the American Red Cross National Headquarters advised me to refer to the organization using the acronym ARC.

volunteer service within its walls, the building publicly affirmed that women's national service did not stop when the guns of war were silenced.

Led by the women of the ARC and joined by other women connected to the war effort, this group memorialized the significant wartime contributions of American women, defined broadly to include all types of service and sacrifice. As noted in chapter one, service meant any type of service to the nation whether it was actual uniformed service in a wartime organization or grassroots volunteer and community service activities on the home front.<sup>207</sup> Sacrifice encompassed the hardships that women endured during these activities, as did mothers, wives, and sisters who supported military members and endured the heartbreak of their deaths or injuries. These inclusive definitions of service and sacrifice enabled the many official and unofficial ways that women aided the war effort to be included and commemorated.

By trying to compromise, this group of women pursued two simultaneous goals. First, they tried to argue that because of American women's traditional commitment to volunteer work, service-based commemorations were the most appropriate types of memorialization projects for women to sponsor, and could be combined with elements of statuary memorials. Their attempted compromise failed to gain the support of the WOSL and revealed the disagreements among overlapping groups of female veteranist-commemorators about how best to pursue their goals. Second, by dedicating a memorial to women's wartime contributions defined so

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<sup>207</sup> The ARC wartime publicity campaign advertised nursing with posters announcing that "Nursing is Military Service." Jones, *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal*, 168.

inclusively, these women attempted to legitimize the value of all forms of female wartime service and insisted that women should be honored just like men. By combining a memorial to women's services and sacrifices with a building devoted to community service, the project constituted tangible evidence of women's contributions to the military, the nation, and local communities, in spite of gender-based restrictions on women's citizenship that excluded them from many official types of national service. As women worked to gain the full rights of enfranchised citizens after the 1920 ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the Memorial Building to the Women to the World War aimed to send an important message to the nation's capital: despite the limitations imposed on them, women had contributed to the war effort and continued to serve their nation.

### *The Background of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War*

A group of influential women within the ARC spearheaded the effort to create the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War. Led by Mabel T. Boardman, a wealthy Washington D.C. philanthropist and a prominent leader of the ARC who served as its National Secretary from 1921 to 1944, these women crafted a powerful argument for a memorial that honored American women's service in the World

War.<sup>208</sup> They successfully gained permission from Congress to construct the building on government property at the Red Cross Headquarters in Washington D.C.

In choosing what type of memorial to build, the women of the ARC initiated a heated debate about the proper way to commemorate the war; this debate reflected the larger national conversation about memorialization that occurred after the war. Their arguments, and those of their opponents, illuminate the contentious nature of the interwar commemorative culture. The ARC's final decision to construct a living memorial building indicated womens' commitment to serving the nation and their interpretation of service as a form of commemoration.

The women who created the Memorial Building emerged from the Progressive era and were influenced by women's involvement with service and reform activities at the turn of the century. Whether they were involved with a settlement house, social work, or policy that dealt with women's and children's issues, Progressive women devoted themselves to serving their local communities, state, and nation.<sup>209</sup> As such, they created a niche for American women to serve their country through their professional careers, volunteer projects, service, and wage work. By the time the U.S. entered the war in 1917, it seemed natural for women to serve the nation at home and

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<sup>208</sup> Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 28; Thomas Martin, Elizabeth G. McPherson, and David Mathisen, revised by Brian McGuire, "Mabel Thorp Boardman: A Register of Her Papers in the Library of Congress" (Washington D.C.: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 2006), 3, <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms006042>> (6 Feb 2015).

<sup>209</sup> See: Sklar, "Hull House: A Community of Women Reformers;" Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935;" Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935*.

<sup>209</sup> Irwin, 28.



abroad, and this tradition continued after the war through veteranist-commemorations.<sup>210</sup>

Founded in 1881 by the famous Civil War nurse Clara Barton, the ARC acted as the United States' chapter of the International Committee of the Red Cross.<sup>211</sup> Like all Red Cross chapters, the ARC served as a neutral organization that provided aid to soldiers during wars.<sup>212</sup> The ARC also took on the unique task of assisting civilians during natural disasters and other peacetime crises under the "American Amendment" to the Geneva Treaty.<sup>213</sup> In 1900, Barton established the ARC's legitimacy when the organization received a Congressional Charter that incorporated it into the Federal Government and designated it as the official organization to carry out the Geneva Convention in the U.S. and to act as the official U.S. voluntary aid association.<sup>214</sup> Just a few years after this victory, organizational infighting led by Mabel Boardman forced Barton to resign as President.<sup>215</sup> Now in control of the ARC, Boardman strengthened its connections to the federal government and increased the government's authority over the organization while she simultaneously gained considerable personal power over the ARC.<sup>216</sup>

After the U.S. entered the World War in April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson designated the ARC as the official organization to coordinate U.S. humanitarian assistance. General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American

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<sup>210</sup> Marian Moser Jones discusses how within the ARC, the Progressive professionalism of men often conflicted with the female culture of volunteerism. Jones, xiii.

<sup>211</sup> Irwin, 5, 15.

<sup>212</sup> Irwin, 5.

<sup>213</sup> Irwin, 5; The American Red Cross, "Who Are We: Our History," *American Red Cross*, n.d. <<http://www.redcross.org/about-us/history>> (16 October 2013).

<sup>214</sup> Irwin, 27.

<sup>215</sup> Irwin, 28-29.

<sup>216</sup> Irwin, 30.

Expeditionary Forces (AEF), also designated it as one of the four official AEF welfare agencies.<sup>217</sup> Equally important, the ARC expanded its ranks and supplied over 18,000 professional uniformed Red Cross nurses to the military; overall, around 24,000 ARC nurses served during the war, both in the U.S. and in Europe.<sup>218</sup> After the war, they constituted one of the principal groups of women, many professionals with careers, commemorated by the Memorial Building.

### *Memorialization Trends after the First World War*

The aftermath of the First World War sparked a memorial-building boom in the U.S. as Americans organized to commemorate the recent victory.<sup>219</sup> Memorial projects constituted a popular cultural trend that resulted in diverse memorials still visible today in towns across America.<sup>220</sup> The ARC bought into this memorial boom and planned two major memorial projects: a statuary memorial to the deceased ARC leader Jane A. Delano and the other nurses who lost their lives, and a living memorial building dedicated to the services and sacrifices of American women during the World War.

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<sup>217</sup> Irwin, 73, 109. The other organizations were the Y.M.C.A., the Salvation Army, and the Knights of Columbus.

<sup>218</sup> Library of Congress, "American Women: Health and Medicine: Red Cross and World War," *The Library of Congress: American Memory* n.d. <[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awmss5/red\\_cross.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awmss5/red_cross.html)> (18 October 2013); US Army, "The Army Nurse Corps," *Women in the U.S. Army* n.d. <<http://www.army.mil/women/nurses.html>> (18 October 2013); Jones, 157. The ARC estimated that about 10,000 American nurses served overseas. Dorothy and Carl Schneider, 287.

<sup>219</sup> Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941*, 1; Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between History and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, 1.

<sup>220</sup> For an examination of statuary memorial trends in U.S. WWI memorials see: Jennifer Wingate, "Doughboys, Art Worlds, and Identities: Sculpted Memories of World War I in the United States," 39-52 and Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials*.

Physical memorials to the First World War varied in material, form, shape, size, location, and other factors. Americans constructed memorials throughout the nation in big cities and small towns, as well as at the overseas battlefields. Some memorials were unobtrusive markers that did not alter the physical landscape in significant ways, such as the bronze memorial plaques often placed on government buildings to honor employees who died in the war.<sup>221</sup> Memorial trees were also popular, especially in cities, parks, and along roadways.<sup>222</sup>

The most common memorials were statuary monuments and utilitarian memorials.<sup>223</sup> Statutory memorials represented the most traditional monument form used after the First World War. Extremely popular, their main function was to act as an aesthetically pleasing piece of art to commemorate the war; they often depicted the average Doughboy.<sup>224</sup> But some Americans came to believe that the most fitting memorials served a purpose beyond simply commemoration through art. Such memorials still aimed for aesthetic beauty, but they were also able to serve the communities in which they were built. Interchangeably called utilitarian memorials, living memorials, and liberty buildings, these structures often took the form of a

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<sup>221</sup> Examples of these plaques were found in: Project Files 1910-1952, Records Relating Primarily to Projects, World War I Memorials, Record Group 66: Commission of Fine Arts, National Archives Building, Washington D.C. Interstate Commerce Commission, Library of Congress Memorial: Box 211. Forest Service: Box 210. Agriculture Department: Box 209. National Archives Building, Washington DC.

<sup>222</sup> Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*, 8, 75, 79.

<sup>223</sup> Several authors provide short overviews of the debates occurring in the U.S. over the best way to commemorate the war, centered on whether a memorial should be utilitarian or a traditional stone structure. Kurt Piehler, "Remembering the War to End All Wars" in *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*, ed. Mark Snell, 29, 41-44; Jennifer Wingate, "Doughboys, Art Worlds, and Identities," 39-52, Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*.

<sup>224</sup> For an in-depth analysis of WWI statues see Wingate, "Doughboys, Art Worlds, and Identities" and Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials*.

memorial building that housed a community service or civic organization.<sup>225</sup> They could also be used for recreational purposes such as stadiums, bandstands, or towers with city views.<sup>226</sup>

Utilitarian memorials prompted lively debate among commentators. Those who supported them often cited the ideals of the war as their justification. An article in the December 1918 edition of *The American City* called for the construction of liberty buildings as victory monuments. It argued that because the Great War, more than any other war, had been fought for the principles of liberty and democracy, it could best be commemorated with a living memorial focused on those principles.<sup>227</sup> Although the author admitted that non-utilitarian memorials could depict those principles, they argued that those memorials would “not have life” and that a monument that symbolized the recent war and those who died in it must immortalize “the principles for which they made the supreme sacrifice...by giving service rather than a statue or a shaft in which there could not pulse the life blood of a new day.”<sup>228</sup> Such strong connections to the war’s principles convinced many Americans, including some in the ARC, that living memorial buildings were a fitting form of

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<sup>225</sup> For an analysis of the origins of living memorials see: Shanken, “Planning Memory: Living Memorials in the United States During World War II”; Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*, 70-84, 190-191, Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World War*, 220-221; Michele H. Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 284. For information on Liberty Buildings see: Britanik, 69.

<sup>226</sup> Examples of this type of memorial include the Washington D.C. WWI Memorial (a bandstand) and the Liberty Memorial, Kansas City, MO (a tower and tourist attraction).

<sup>227</sup> “Liberty Buildings as Victory Monuments,” *The American City*, December 1918, Folder: Project Files World War I Memorials (General), Box 208, RG 66, NAB; “About Us,” *American City and County* (7 January 2014) <<http://americancityandcounty.com/about>>; Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*, 79; Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, 103-106.

<sup>228</sup> “Liberty Buildings as Victory Monuments.”

commemoration. Living memorials also embodied the principles of the Progressive Movement because they concretely gave back to the community.<sup>229</sup>

Others opposed living memorials and favored statuary monuments instead. In April 1920, the famous sculptor and art patron Mrs. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, a designer of statuary memorials and who had served overseas during the war, published an article in *Arts and Decoration* that denounced utilitarian living memorials.<sup>230</sup> Whitney believed that art should give pleasure to people and did not need to fulfill additional purposes. She saw utilitarian memorials as a misunderstanding of the purpose of artistic war memorials and thought that they took glory away from those being honored. She did not deny that the hospitals, stadiums, and other buildings created as living memorials were important and necessary, but she believed that they “have nothing to do with war memorials.”<sup>231</sup> Whitney denounced utilitarian memorials and urged Americans to build what she sarcastically called “useless memorials” unable to be mistaken for anything other than a memorial.<sup>232</sup> According to Whitney, such “useless” memorials would not get lost in the landscape of a city or have their memorial purposes forgotten; they would stand as permanent reminders of the war and fulfill what Whitney saw as the true goal of a

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<sup>229</sup> Piehler, “Remembering the War to End All Wars,” 41-43. Shanken, 132.

<sup>230</sup> Whitney designed several WWI memorials such as the St. Nazaire Memorial in France as well as the small sculpture “The Spirit of the Red Cross” which resides in the Civil War Building at the ARC Headquarters today. Jennifer Meehan, “A Finding Aid to the Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney papers, 1851-1975, Bulk 1888-1942, in the Archives of American Art” *Archives of American Art*, n.d. <<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/gertrude-vanderbilt-whitney-papers-7107/more>> (5 December 2013); Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, “The Useless Memorial,” *Arts and Decoration* Vol. 12, No. 6 (April 25 1920): 421. For more on Whitney see: Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*, 84-85, 115-116, 129-134.

<sup>231</sup> “The Useless Memorial.”

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

memorial.<sup>233</sup> Even though she served and sacrificed in the war and was a member of the WOSL, Whitney opposed some aspects of veteranist-commemorations. Her opinion shows how these women often disagreed with each other and how veteranist-commemorations did not completely overtake “useless” statuary memorials.<sup>234</sup>

Some important officials in the art world agreed with Whitney. The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), the official advisory board that presides over Washington D.C.’s artistic and architectural development, published a pamphlet about war memorials that indicated that they preferred statuary memorials.<sup>235</sup> The CFA believed memorials should be “devoid of practical utility, but...minister to a much higher use; they compel contemplation of the great men and ideals which they commemorate.”<sup>236</sup> Despite this statement, which ignored the possibility that memorials could commemorate great women as well as great men, the CFA still seemed divided about utilitarian memorials. In the same pamphlet, the CFA conceded that living memorials did have some value. They described memorial buildings as “devoted to high purposes, educational or humanitarian, that whether large or small, costly or inexpensive, would through excellence of design be an example and inspiration to present and future generations.”<sup>237</sup> But the CFA cautioned that if a memorial building were constructed, it must “impress the beholder by beauty of

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Whitney’s name appears in several membership rosters of the WOSL. Box 1922-1932 and Box: 1933-1939, Women’s Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>235</sup> For a history of the CFA see: Sally Kress Tompkins, *A Quest for Grandeur: Charles Moore and the Federal Triangle* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 1-9.

<sup>236</sup> “War Memorials: Suggestions as to the Forms of Memorials and the Methods of Obtaining Designers,” Folder: Project Files World War I Memorials (General), Box 207, RG 66, NAB.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

design, the permanent nature of the material used, and the fitness of the setting.”<sup>238</sup>

As might be expected, the CFA valued artistic achievement above all else, especially utilitarian goals. Perhaps as a form of appeasement, the CFA included utilitarian memorials in their suggestions with the disclaimer that artistic beauty must still take precedence.

The ARC’s decision to construct a living memorial building dedicated to women’s roles in the World War placed the organization in the center of the debate between traditional monuments and utilitarian living memorial buildings. By building what they argued was a living memorial, they confirmed their support for utilitarian buildings. But they also erected a traditional statuary memorial to honor Jane A. Delano and other deceased nurses on the grounds of their headquarters, just behind the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War. That decision, along with their choice to designate architectural details of the Memorial Building as individual memorials, demonstrated that they still clung to some aspects of more traditional memorials and tried to find a middle ground.

Even with these concessions, the ARC’s decision to erect what they argued was a living memorial building as their principal monument to the World War wedded them to the utilitarian memorial movement. The ARC defined this project as a living memorial building and believed it would fulfill the service purpose required of living memorials. They interpreted their choice as a way to embrace female veteranist-commemorators’ argument that memorial projects should involve service activities,

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

even though the WOSL later asserted that the project did not constitute a successful living memorial building.

The Memorial Building to the Women of the World War was not the first living memorial building constructed at the ARC headquarters in Washington D.C. In 1917, the ARC completed their first headquarters building and dedicated it as a “Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War” (figures 2.2 and 2.3).<sup>239</sup> Built on the same government land where the World War building would later be located, and also authorized by Congress, it commemorated the women of the North and South during the Civil War.<sup>240</sup> Just a few blocks from the ARC’s former temporary headquarters inside the State, War, and Navy Building next to the White House (today’s Eisenhower Executive Office Building), the new headquarters’ positioned the ARC in close proximity to the federal agencies it collaborated with and depended upon for its future. This first memorial building created a precedent at the ARC Headquarters which would be followed after the First World War to honor the latest generation of women to support the nation.

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<sup>239</sup> American Red Cross, “American Red Cross National Headquarters Visitor’s Guide” (American Red Cross, June 2007), informational pamphlet; Shane MacDonald, Guided Tour of American Red Cross National Headquarters, 16 August 2013.

<sup>240</sup> “American Red Cross National Headquarters Visitor’s Guide;” letter Nov 13, 1920 to Mr. Hughes from Miss Butle, Folder 301: Delano, Jane Sept-Dec 1920, Box 22, American Red Cross Historical and WWI Nurse Files, RG 200: National Archives Gift Collection, Records of the American National Red Cross, NACP; 38 Stat. 233.





Figure 2.2: Front façade of the Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War, Washington D.C. May 31, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.



Figure 2.3: Detail of the front façade of the Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War, Washington D.C. The inscription under the cornice reads: "In Memory of the Heroic Women of the Civil War." May 31, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

President Woodrow Wilson laid the cornerstone for the Memorial to Heroic Women of the Civil War on March 27, 1915, as the Great War raged in Europe. Construction of the neoclassical marble building began shortly afterward.<sup>241</sup> Three stained-glass memorial windows by the Louis Comfort Tiffany Studio memorialized the women who lost relatives in the Civil War and cared for the sick and wounded combatants. A joint gift from the Women's Relief Corps of the North and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, these windows symbolized the sectional reconciliation that the building encouraged.<sup>242</sup> They added a spiritual element to the structure since stained glass windows are traditionally found in religious buildings like churches and cathedrals. These windows featured Christian themes and images such as St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Filomena, and figures that represented Mercy, Faith, Hope, and Charity.<sup>243</sup> As one of the building's most prominent features, the memorial windows connected the building and the ARC's mission to Christianity. This connection to Christianity differentiated the Civil War building from the later World War building, which lacked clear religious references and Christian undertones. This distinction demonstrates the more secular nature of the World War building and how the ARC changed their approach to memorial buildings after World War One.

A little over a month after the U.S. entered the World War, President Wilson returned to the ARC headquarters on May 12, 1917, to dedicate the completed

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> "American Red Cross National Headquarters Visitor's Guide" and Guided Tour of American Red Cross National Headquarters. For more about the Women's Relief Corps, see: Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*.

<sup>243</sup> Undated postcards of the memorial windows, Folder: "ARC Buildings-Memorial Windows, Stained Glass," Box:

ARC Buildings and Memorials: Civil War Memorial, Women of World War, DC Chapter, Old Georgetown Road, Ballroom Open House 6/16/2006, ARC New National Headquarters, American Red Cross National Headquarters Archive, Washington D.C.

Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War.<sup>244</sup> Wilson used his speech at the dedication ceremony to defend the nation's entrance into the conflict and gain support for the war effort.<sup>245</sup> Afterwards, the President reviewed about one thousand members of the Women's Volunteer Aid Corps, an occasion which *The Washington Post* believed to be the first mobilization of uniformed women war workers in the U.S.<sup>246</sup> At the building's dedication, the Civil War and the First World War collided. Americans celebrated the reunion of the North and the South by honoring women from both sides, while a new generation of American women began to participate in a new war effort. Thirteen years later, in 1930, these women would be honored at the same site with a memorial building of their own that cemented their place in the landscape of memory at the Red Cross's Headquarters.

*"The Spirit of Nursing": The Jane Delano Memorial*

As a leader of American nursing at the turn of the century, Jane Arminda Delano created the American Red Cross Nursing service, which she led during the First World War. A former superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps before she stepped down to focus on the ARC, under her direction the American Red Cross Nursing Service provided the majority of the Army and Navy nurses during the war.<sup>247</sup> While she surveyed the conditions of American nurses still stationed overseas, on April 15,

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<sup>244</sup> "New Marble Home of the American Red Cross Dedicated," *St. Louis Post – Dispatch*, 13 May 1917, pg. 1, available on ProQuest Historical Newspapers (30 October 2013).

<sup>245</sup> Ibid; "Wilson Eulogizes Our Principles" *Los Angeles Times*, 13 May 1917, pg. 15, ProQuest Historical Newspapers (30 October, 2013); "Red Cross Home Dedication May 12," *The Washington Post*, pg. 7, 16 April 1917, ProQuest Historical Newspapers (30 October, 2013).

<sup>246</sup> "Red Cross Home Dedication May 12;" "New Marble Home of the American Red Cross Dedicated."

<sup>247</sup> Jones, 167-168.

1919, in Savenay, France, Delano died suddenly of mastoiditis, an infection of the ear and skull that could possibly have been a complication from influenza.<sup>248</sup> Her death at age fifty-seven shocked the ARC, and in addition to various memorial ceremonies, efforts began to construct a permanent memorial in her honor.<sup>249</sup>

The ARC established the Delano Fund Committee to pursue this secondary memorial project at their headquarters, even while they also chose to erect a living memorial building as their main monument to the war. Completed in 1933, the Jane Delano Memorial, officially named “The Spirit of Nursing,” honored the service and sacrifices of Delano and the other 296 American Nurses estimated at that time to have died during World War One. Many of these women succumbed to influenza during the pandemic of 1918, one of the leading causes of wartime death for American women who served in the war.<sup>250</sup> In contrast to the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, this statue had no service component or utilitarian purpose; it was intended purely for commemorative purposes (figure 2.4).

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<sup>248</sup> “Noted R. C. Worker is Dead in Paris,” *Miami Herald*, 19 April 1919, p. 5, America’s Historical Newspapers (17 October 2013); “Jane A. Delano Memorial Pamphlet,” Folder: 301: Delano, Jane Jan.-Dec. 1921, Box 22, American Red Cross Historical And WWI Nurse Files, RG 200, NACP; Kathleen Burger Johnson, “Delano, Jane Arminda (1862-1919)” in *An Encyclopedia of American Women at War: From Home front to the Battlefields*, ed. Lisa Tendrich Frank (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2013): 186-187;187; Gavin, 62-63.

<sup>249</sup> “Letter from F.C. Munrow, Red Cross General Manager to all department and bureau heads of HQ April 18, 1919,” Folder 301, Box 21, American Red Cross Historical And WWI Nurse Files, RG 200, NACP. Numerous examples of memorial ceremonies for Delano were found in: Box 21, American Red Cross Historical And WWI Nurse Files, Record Group 200, NACP. A committee formed in April 1920 to organize efforts for a memorial to Delano. Clara D. Noyes, “Unveiling of Memorial to Our Heroic Nurses,” in the *Red Cross Courier*, pg. 358-359, Folder 005. Nurses Memorial, Box 1, RG 200 1917-1934, NACP.

<sup>250</sup> Gavin, 11-12, 63-64, 75, 157, 252-256. The number of American nurses who died during their wartime service varies; a definitive number is hard to verify. The “Spirit of Nursing” used the number they had at the time and it may not be accurate.



Figure 2.4: “The Spirit of Nursing” Memorial, Red Cross Headquarters, Washington D.C. May 31, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The decision to erect a statue emerged after years of debate about the possible ways to memorialize Delano and the deceased nurses. In December 1921, Lillian L. White wrote to Clara Noyes about how they needed to communicate with all Red Cross nurses and districts to get their opinions about what type of memorial they wanted to build with the money raised by the Delano Fund Committee. White included four possible choices, none of which were statuary memorials. These choices included a home for ailing nurses, a hospital for nurses, using the money to augment the National Relief Fund, or the creation of a pension fund for nurses.<sup>251</sup> A utilitarian memorial appealed to the Red Cross even before the later idea for the living memorial building had been fully formulated.

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<sup>251</sup> “Letter, Lillian L. White to Clara Noyes,” Folder 301, Box, 22, American Red Cross Historical and WWI Nurse Files, RG 200, NACP.

The Delano Fund also pursued the possibility of a traditional statue, which they ultimately decided upon. In 1927, the CFA rejected a design by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, one that she provided to the ARC free of charge.<sup>252</sup> By this time, the process of choosing a memorial had become so mired in debate that the Delano Fund Committee chairman, Adda Eldredge, realized that ARC members were confused about the Fund's plans for the memorial. She attempted to clarify the situation, offering stakeholders a choice between a statue and a utilitarian memorial.<sup>253</sup> Mabel Boardman also proposed a memorial room dedicated to Delano and the deceased nurses inside the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, her new project.<sup>254</sup> She thought that using this utilitarian memorial room for service projects "would inspire and help to carry on the nursing services of the Red Cross."<sup>255</sup> Although Boardman had initially favored a statuary memorial, she realized that "the many monuments now in Washington are becoming a detriment to the beauty of the city and tend to give it, as many think, the appearance of a graveyard."<sup>256</sup> Now that the memorial building project was underway, perhaps Boardman thought it best to consolidate the two projects and focus on the service building. Of course, Boardman's personal investment in the Memorial Building project may also have influenced her opinion. In the end, Boardman lost the battle and a traditional statuary monument was built on the grounds of the Red Cross

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<sup>252</sup> "Report of the Delano Committee to the State Nurse's Association, July 9, 1927," Mabel Thorp Boardman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>253</sup> "Letter from Adda Eldredge," Folder 005. Nurses Memorial, Box 1, RG 200 1918-1934, NACP.

<sup>254</sup> I learned that Minnigerode was the Superintendent of Nurses for the U.S. Public Health Service from: Letter to Boardman from Minnigerode, 29 June 1928, p. 1, Box 10, Mabel Thorp Boardman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; "Letter from Boardman to Minnigerode," pg. 1, Folder 005. Nurses Memorial, Box 1, RG 200 1917-1934, NACP.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 2.

Headquarters.<sup>257</sup> The Delano Memorial Fund later used part of their resources to dedicate an Ionic marble column in memory of Delano and the other deceased nurses on the Memorial Building (figure 2.5).<sup>258</sup>



Figure 2.5: Detail of the column dedicated to Jane Delano and deceased Red Cross Nurses, front façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. The inscription reads: “To Jane A. Delano and 296 Nurses Who Lost Their Lives in the War.” August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

R. Tait McKenzie, the designer of the “Spirit of Nursing” memorial in honor of Delano and her colleagues, had a personal connection to the war: he was a Canadian sculptor, physician, and physical therapist who served as a medical officer in England during the war and whose wife, Ethel O’Neill McKenzie, was a WOSL

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<sup>257</sup> “Unveiling of Memorial to Our Heroic Nurses,” 358.

<sup>258</sup> Abstract of Report of the Delano Memorial Fund, January 17, 1921,” Folder 005, Nurses Memorial Jane A. Delano & 296 Nurses Who Died in World War I, Box 1, RG 200, NACP.

member who served with the Red Cross in England.<sup>259</sup> His design of the “Spirit of Nursing” memorial consisted of a central bronze statue of a nurse who stands within a marble stele flanked on both sides by curved marble benches (see figure 2.4). The backs of these benches contain an inscription of lines from the 91<sup>st</sup> psalm: “thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night. Nor for the arrow that walketh in darkness. Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.”<sup>260</sup> Since the memorial honored all nurses from the various nursing organizations that died during the war and not just Delano and ARC nurses, McKenzie intentionally designed the nurse as a general representation of female nurses.<sup>261</sup> The nurse depicted in the statue wore no specific uniform and bore no resemblance to any particular nurse, despite facing initial criticisms for this from the CFA.<sup>262</sup>

The memorial’s design and inscription infused it with religious and Christian overtones and connected it to wartime imagery. The figure of the nurse bore a striking resemblance to Michelangelo’s Madonna della Pietà in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome (figure 2.6).<sup>263</sup> This stylistic similarity presented the American nurse as a type of religious mother to the soldiers she treated. It compared the nurse to the Mother Mary

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<sup>259</sup> “Unveiling of Memorial to Our Heroic Nurses,” 358. Mrs. R. Tait McKenzie was a member of the Philadelphia WOSL unit. “Presented at Court,” pg. 21, *Carry On* No. 3, Vol. VI, Aug 1927, MS 22 Box 37, The Women’s Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections; Theresa R. Snyder, revised by Nicole Topich, “R. Tait McKenzie Papers, 1880-1940,” *University of Pennsylvania, University Archives & Records Center*, 2012 <[http://www.archives.upenn.edu/faids/upt/upt50/mckenzie\\_rt.html](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/faids/upt/upt50/mckenzie_rt.html)> (22 January 2015); Simon Fraser University Library Digital Collections, “McKenzie, Ethel O’Neil,” *Canada’s Early Women Writers*, 1980-2014 <<http://content.lib.sfu.ca/cdm/ref/collection/ceww/id/174>> (22 January 2015).

<sup>260</sup> “Unveiling of Memorial to Our Heroic Nurses,” 358-359.

<sup>261</sup> “Letter to Mr. Cammerer,” Folder: Project Files: Jane A. Delano Memorial, Box 43, RG 66, National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>262</sup> Letters from several members of the CFA to McKenzie criticized the design of the memorial. These letters can be found in: Folder: Project Files: Jane A. Delano Memorial, Box 43, RG 66, NAB.

<sup>263</sup> Peter Spring, translator and editor, *Guide to the Vatican: Museums and City* (Edizioni Musei Vaticani: Vatican City, 2007), 215-216.



and imbued her with a Christian mission of caring for America's sons. This pictorial comparison of the nurse to the Madonna dominated World War One era Red Cross imagery and became an iconic part of their wartime posters. These posters featured drawings of ARC nurses that looked similar to both the Madonna and the "Spirit of Nursing" statue. One of the most famous of these posters, entitled "The World's Greatest Mother," showed a nurse cradling a wounded soldier on a stretcher in a pose similar to how the Madonna cradles Christ in Michelangelo's *Pietà* (figure 2.7).<sup>264</sup> A poster for the Third Red Cross Roll Call shows a younger nurse holding out her hands in the same position as the nurse in the "Spirit of Nursing" (figure 2.8). Both nurses on these posters featured flowing headpieces that looked like nun's habits and mimicked the head covering on the Madonna; this connected the nurses to religious symbolism.

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<sup>264</sup> Irwin 86; Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys*, 175-176; John M. Kinder, "Iconography of Injury: Encountering the Wounded Soldier's Body in American Poster Art and Photography of World War I," in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 345-347.



Figure 2.6: The Madonna della Pietà by Michelangelo, St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. Photograph by Stanislav Traykov, Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 2.7: ARC poster "The Greatest Mother in the World," circa 1918. The Library of Congress.



Figure 2.8: ARC poster “Third Red Cross Roll Call,” 1918. Library of Congress.

The CFA worried about the religious undertones of the memorial, and like Boardman, they feared that the proliferation of monuments in Washington D.C. would soon make the city seem like a cemetery. They thought that the memorial “carried the suggestion of a cemetery memorial instead of a civic monument” and believed it seemed more religious than secular.<sup>265</sup> Although many memorials to the First World War constructed during the interwar period included religious symbolism, the Memorial Building to the Women of the First World War remained secular, while the “Spirit of Nursing” statue located just behind it, contained religious elements.<sup>266</sup> Perhaps the more traditional statuary memorial seemed appropriate for

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<sup>265</sup> “Letter to Mr. Cammerer.”

<sup>266</sup> Many memorials to the First World War were in the shape of a cross, such as the Memorial Peace Cross in Bladensburg, MD. All of the overseas American WWI cemeteries run by the American Battle Monuments Commission used headstones in the shape of crosses or Stars of David instead of the

Christian iconography, while the more modern Memorial Building seemed too secular to include religious references like in the earlier Civil War Building. Several years later in 1938, the Army and Navy Nurse Corps unveiled a statue in memory of deceased nurses in the nurses section of Arlington National Cemetery (figure 2.9).<sup>267</sup> Designed by Frances Rich, this marble statue adopted a more modern and almost art-deco aesthetic without blatant religious references.<sup>268</sup> Although this nurse still wore the traditional cape, it did not cover her head like the “Spirit of Nursing,” and she looks less like the Madonna than the ARC statue. The Arlington statue seems to demonstrate how over time, nurse statues evolved farther away from the religious imagery of the Pietà.

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rectangular-shaped headstone used in military cemeteries in the U.S. These religious headstone and the Chapels at each ABMC cemetery give the cemeteries a distinctly religious tone.

<sup>267</sup> “Memorial to Honor Army and Navy Nurses,” *The Star*, November 7, 1938, Folder: Project Files Arlington National Cemetery-Army & Navy Nurses Memorial, Box: Records Relating Primarily to Projects, PROJECT FILES, 1910-1952, Arlington National Cemetery-Army & Navy Nurses Memorial To Arlington National Cemetery-Expansion, Box 19 PI 79-Entry 17, RG 66:Commission of Fine Arts, National Archives, Washington D.C.; Arlington National Cemetery, “Nurses Memorial,” *Arlington National Cemetery: Explore the Cemetery*, n.d. <<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore-the-Cemetery/Monuments-and-Memorials/Nurses-Memorial>> (27 December 2014).

<sup>268</sup> “Arlington Monument Unveiled to Watch Over Graves of Nurses,” *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1938, pg. 2, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



Figure 2.9: Nurses Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. The memorial is located in a section of the cemetery where WWI nurses are buried. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein. June 9, 2014.

The coexistence of the “Spirit of Nursing” memorial and the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War demonstrates that debates between statuary memorials and living memorials occurred even within the same organization. Despite their decision to collectively commemorate women through a new memorial building, the ARC community still wanted to honor the individual memories of the deceased nurses in a more traditional manner. Like some other veteranist-commemorators, but unlike the WOSL, they did not completely reject all forms of statuary memorials; this choice reveals the ongoing disagreements within the overlapping ranks of female veteranist-commemorators.

### *Choosing a Memorial Building*

The memorial building that ultimately became the ARC's main World War One memorial at their National Headquarters in Washington D.C. honored the services and sacrifices of all American women in the war. It constituted a *lieux de memoire*—a site of memory deriving meaning from the landscape—that honored American women's contributions to the war while it facilitated their continued service work.<sup>269</sup> The ARC believed it would operate as a living memorial building because they intended it to accommodate service activities inside its walls. With this new memorial building, the ARC tried to embrace the concept of a memorial that could improve the present and the future while it commemorated the past, although the WOSL would later assert that it failed to accomplish that mission.

Fundraising efforts for this project argued that women's contributions to the war needed to be commemorated. A 1926 *New York Tribune* article urged readers to donate through an appeal to include women in the pantheon of memory. The article noted how “one of the aftermaths of war is the desire to express in stone, bronze or marble the affection of the people for those who gave their lives for their country” and asked “what of the women who loved and lost? What memorial rises to commemorate their sacrifices?”<sup>270</sup> The new ARC memorial building would try to ensure that American women would be commemorated.

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<sup>269</sup> Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” 7-24; Nora, ed. *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire, Volume 1-3*.

<sup>270</sup> “Transcript of text of *New York Tribune* article from February 11, 1936 sent from Mabel Boardman to Mr. Augustus K. Oliver,” p.1, Folder: 481.7, Box 429: Specifications for erection & completion of world war memorial RG 200, NACP.

The other Allied combatants had already begun to honor women, and Boardman called for the U.S. to follow their lead.<sup>271</sup> She described how Great Britain had restored the Five Sisters Window in York Minster to commemorate the 583 women who died while serving Great Britain during the war.<sup>272</sup> A home for disabled male soldiers had been created in Richmond, England as a living memorial to women's services, and a statue of the martyred nurse Edith Cavell had been erected in London.<sup>273</sup> Canada laid the cornerstone for a Women's War Memorial Building in Ottawa, and in Florence, Italy, a monument to Italian mothers who lost their sons had been unveiled at the Duomo.<sup>274</sup>

Like these memorials in Europe and Canada, Boardman envisioned the Memorial Building as "an expression in visual form of a great and tender gratitude to our American mothers who gave their sons and to our women who, like the soldiers, lost their lives in their country's cause."<sup>275</sup> To declare its eternal commemorative purpose, the building would contain the following inscription to emphasize its intended dual commemorative service mission (figure 2.10):

A Memorial built by the government and the People of the United States in loving gratitude for the sacrifices and services of the Women of America in the World War. That their labors to lessen suffering may be carried on, the Building is dedicated to the Chapter Service of the American Red Cross.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> This article was most likely published in the *Red Cross Courier*. Mabel T. Boardman, "American Women's War Memorial," December 1926 Folder: 481.73 Memorials-Inscriptions, Box 428: 481.13 Main Building & Grounds-Alterations Rebuilding & Relocating, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> "Transcript of text of *New York Tribune* article..." pg. 2. This exact inscription could not be found on the building today. However, a similarly worded inscription was found inside the front foyer above the central door. It reads: "A living memorial given by the government and the people of the United States in loving memory of the sacrifices and services of America's heroic women in the World War dedicated to the service of suffering humanity through the American Red Cross." Fieldwork by the author, 16 August 2013.



As the *New York Tribune* asserted, the memorial building would work “not only to commemorate sacrifice and service, but to help carry on the type of service that is commemorated...so that the humanitarian deeds of the Red Cross will themselves be part of the Memorial.”<sup>277</sup> By trying to interweave service and commemoration, it was hoped that the building would lessen the “suffering of mankind throughout the world now and for the years to come” while it also honored American women.<sup>278</sup>



Figure 2.10: Inscription in front foyer of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. Note that the wording of this inscription differs slightly from what was originally planned. August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

Specifically, the Memorial Building commemorated the services and sacrifices of American women during the war. Each of these terms encompassed the multiple ways that women served or sacrificed so that any way that a woman

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<sup>277</sup> “Transcript of text of *New York Tribune* article...”pg. 2.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid, 4.



contributed to the war could be included. A pamphlet that promoted the project explained that the sacrifice category included not just the nurses who died during the war but also “those other self-sacrificing women who died because of their war labors at home and overseas” and “the heart-breaking sacrifices made by American women who lost their sons or others dear to them for our country’s sake.”<sup>279</sup> The pamphlet defined the service category as commemorating “all those who served faithfully, loyally, and tirelessly for the Government” and organizations such as the Red Cross, the YWCA, and the Salvation Army.<sup>280</sup> These broad categories recognized that women aided the war effort within and beyond official military, government, and civilian organizations. Women’s work on the home front received equal recognition, as did the sacrifices made by women who lost their relatives and suffered personal tragedies. Their hardships and patriotism were deemed just as important as those made by the women who donned a uniform for overseas work or even men who joined the military. The Memorial Building testified to the contributions of women to the military long before they were officially able to enter all its branches.<sup>281</sup>

The new memorial building needed government authorization to be constructed since the government owned the Red Cross Headquarters property. Authorized by the 71st Congress through Public Resolution No.39, S.J. 98 on March 4, 1927, the American National Red Cross received a \$350,000 government

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<sup>279</sup> Undated pamphlet,” Folder: 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box 429, 481.7: Specifications for erection & completion of world war memorial, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> At the start of WWI, women already served in the Army and Navy as uniformed nurses but they lacked any official rank. On March 21, 1917 the Navy announced that women would officially be able to join the Navy and Marine Corps as Yeoman (F). Ebbert and Hall, *The First, the Few, the Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*, ix, 1.

appropriation to support construction, as long as they matched that sum through their own fundraising efforts.<sup>282</sup> The resolution stated that the building would remain the property of the U.S. Government but be administered by the ARC and would be used by the District of Columbia Chapter of the ARC.<sup>283</sup>

This provision enabled the ARC to try to devote the memorial building to service activities and attempt to fulfill the utilitarian purpose for which they created it. The District of Columbia Chapter intended to use the building as a model chapter house where they would conduct research on service activities from which the national organization could benefit. They planned to utilize the building as a place to study problems and programs before they submitted their conclusions to chapters nationwide.<sup>284</sup> Establishing this building as the Washington D.C. Chapter House gave it a specific service mission that endeavored to fulfill its civic duty as a living memorial by helping local ARC chapters aid their communities.

Blueprints of the building demarcated how each floor would be devoted to specific service activities and demonstrated the breadth and diversity of the service work that would occupy the building. The basement stored the practical necessities of the ARC's community service projects. It contained a room for cutting, assembling and packing, rooms designated for the storage of emergency supplies, canteen

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<sup>282</sup> The plans for the building required approval from the CFA, the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, the American National Red Cross Committee, the Secretary of War, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Library, and the Chairman of the House Committee on the Library. "Public Resolution No.39, S.J. 98," Folder 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box 429, 481.7:Specifications for erection & completion of World War memorial, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid; Pamphlet about WOSL dedicating column, pg.1, Scrapbook of Toledo Unit kept by Julia Norton. 84.150.1, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

supplies, a motor corps ambulance, and other materials, and a kitchen for canteen and nutrition classes.<sup>285</sup> The rooms on the first floor focused on the major community service research areas to be studied by the Washington D.C. Chapter. These included rooms for hospital service, home service, home hygiene and care of the sick, the Junior Red Cross, a braille room, a first aid classroom, and an office for the issuing of receipts and supplies. The first floor also contained the staff office and the office of the chairman and executive committee, located in a prominent position to the right of the building's main entryway.<sup>286</sup>

A huge room that resembled a ballroom occupied the second and third floors of the building. Interchangeably called the Hall of Service, the Service Hall, and the Community Workroom, this large, formal open space was decorated with fluted columns, pilasters, and the ARC emblem. It included a stage, above which hung a stone sign carved with gold letters that read: "to commemorate service" (figures 2.11 and 12)<sup>287</sup> This sign reminded those who used the room that the building commemorated women's service work in the war and facilitated their continued dedication to service activities. The Hall also included three small rooms that different blueprints demarcated as either branch work rooms, branch classrooms, and a room for the nursing committee and health aids, or for the production of garment

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<sup>285</sup> "First Floor Plan, Memorial Building to the Women of the World War," Box: ARC Buildings and Memorials, Civil War Memorial, Women of World War, DC Chapter, Old Georgetown Road, Ballroom Open House 6/16/2006, ARC New National Headquarters, American Red Cross National Headquarters Archive; Unlabeled blueprint, Folder: 481.7 D.C. Chapter House, Box 428, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> This information was gathered by the author while on a tour of American Red Cross National Headquarters on 16 August 2013.

supplies, a surgical dressing and cutting room, and a dressing room.<sup>288</sup> Thus, even the most formal floor of the building contained spaces for the ARC to conduct specific service work. The D.C. chapter also announced that they hoped to include facilities at the building to support disaster relief and home services for disabled ex-service men.<sup>289</sup>



Figure 2.11: View from the balcony of the “Hall of Service” inside the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

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<sup>288</sup> “First Floor Plan, Memorial Building to the Women of the World War,” Box: ARC Buildings and Memorials, Civil War Memorial, Women of World War, DC Chapter, Old Georgetown Road, Ballroom Open House 6/16/2006, ARC New National Headquarters, American Red Cross National Headquarters Archive; Unlabeled blueprint, Folder: 481.7 D.C. Chapter House, Box 428, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>289</sup> “Pamphlet about the Memorial Building (no date)”, Folder 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box 429, 481.7 Specifications for erection & completion of world war memorial, RG 200, NACP.



Figure 2.12: Detail of the sign hanging above the stage in the “Hall of Service” inside the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. The inscription reads: “To Commemorate Service.” August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The realities of Jim Crow America required the ARC to consider segregation in the building, especially because of its public purpose. Blueprints of the basement show separate toilets specifically reserved for “male help” and “female help” which were probably used as segregated bathrooms.<sup>290</sup> Segregation seems to have been discussed quietly during the building’s planning phase. In a letter to the ARC Chairman, Judge Payne, in March of 1926, Mr. James L. Fieser, the ARC vice chairman, described the current plan for accommodating African-Americans at the building.<sup>291</sup> He had learned from Boardman that “there is definite space for two rooms assigned to negroes on the second floor. I question the wisdom of any notice of

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<sup>290</sup> ARC New National Headquarters, American Red Cross National Headquarters Archive; Unlabeled blueprint, Folder: 481.7 D.C. Chapter House, Box 428, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>291</sup> I learned of Fieser’s official title in the ARC from: Jones, viii.

segregation of this sort.”<sup>292</sup> Fieser did not suggest eliminating the plans for segregation but implied that this policy should not be publicly advertised. He adhered to common social practices and racial prejudices while he suggested the inappropriateness of segregation at a living memorial building.<sup>293</sup> Perhaps Fieser saw segregation as incompatible with the building’s service goals, or perhaps he merely wanted to spare the building controversy either from a lack of segregation or a backlash against it. Veteranist-commemorators were not immune to racial prejudice nor could they ignore the realities of Jim Crow America.

The endorsement of several prominent public figures legitimized the importance of the Memorial Building and its mission to continue women’s service work with the ARC. Upon accepting the role of Honorary Chairman of the Memorial Fund Committee, General John J. Pershing proclaimed that “no cause appears more worthy than this effort to commemorate the services of our women.”<sup>294</sup> Pershing highlighted women’s diverse wartime contributions, from mothers of soldiers to nurses who served overseas. But Pershing also subscribed to contemporary gender norms and lauded American women for their gentle, soothing natures which comforted soldiers.<sup>295</sup> Pershing saw women as simultaneously brave and patriotic while also nurturing and feminine, like the quasi-religious image of the ARC nurse depicted as the “world’s greatest mother.” He also emphasized women’s postwar service and highlighted how “even in this Memorial of services and sacrifices they

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<sup>292</sup> “Letter to Judge Payne from Mr. James L. Fieser,” Folder: Folder: 481.73 Memorials-Inscriptions, Box 428, RG 200 1917-1934, NACP.

<sup>293</sup> Julia Irwin notes that during WWI at least, the ARC had no national segregation policy in place and allowed local chapters to conform to practices of segregation and discrimination. Irwin, 102.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

seek to make it a means of inspiring future generations.”<sup>296</sup> He characterized women’s commemorative efforts with this living memorial building as a national service because it created a place for them to continue their wartime work. As the former commander of the AEF and a national hero at the time, Pershing’s endorsement established women as key players in the war effort and praised them as civic leaders and model citizens committed to serving their communities.

The memorial campaign also received the support of Chief Justice and former President William Howard Taft, a close friend of Boardman’s and an ARC supporter who served at separate times as its chair and President.<sup>297</sup> Taft endorsed the project and noted that “war memorials to the men are prominent throughout the country and shall our people be less grateful to the women who labored at home, on the battlefield, and in the hospitals with a patriotic devotion unexcelled and who, in giving those they loved, made even a greater sacrifice?”<sup>298</sup> Taft believed a utilitarian memorial was an appropriate choice because “the loyal and patriotic spirit of the women to whom this Memorial is built will be forever perpetuated in the humane work of the Red Cross.”<sup>299</sup> Taft also believed it was fitting to locate the building so close to the government and military departments the ARC supported. This location highlighted women’s impact on the government and the military during the war through the building’s external memorial features, while the service work that took place inside the building showcased women’s continued commitment to national service.

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Irwin, 49.

<sup>298</sup> “Pamphlet about the Memorial Building (no date).”

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

Adding to the list of important public figures that supported the project, Rear Admiral W.S. Benson, Chief of Naval Operations during the war, provided his endorsement in 1923.<sup>300</sup> He described the ways that women supported the Navy, but omitted how through creation of the Navy Yeoman (F) in 1917, the Navy and Marine Corps were the first and only services to officially include women in their ranks, albeit temporarily.<sup>301</sup> Benson focused more on women's contributions that better fit into the category of voluntary activities than military service and paid work, suggesting that despite advancements such as the Yeoman (F) and the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, gender roles still precluded women from being recognized for their military service.

Despite these strong endorsements, the project encountered voices of dissent from those who questioned its appropriateness and necessity. The Rockefeller Memorial, a charitable foundation that donated to the ARC's Civil War Building, expressed doubts about the project when Boardman asked for a donation.<sup>302</sup> Arthur Wood, acting president of the Foundation, suspected that the project's female leaders were overly excited about their mission and might not have been thinking clearly about whether such a building was actually needed, or if it was just a frivolous amusement to keep the "good ladies" of the ARC occupied. By calling them "good ladies," Woods made gender a defining factor in his apprehension about making a

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<sup>300</sup> "Letter to Boardman from Rear Admiral W.S. Benson," Folder: 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box 429: 481.7 Specifications for erection & completion of World War Memorial, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>301</sup> Ebbert and Hall, *The Fist, the Few, the Forgotten*; Godson, *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy*.

<sup>302</sup> Irwin, 35, 57-58.



donation and portrayed these women as amateurs who should not be trusted with such a big project.<sup>303</sup>

The project also encountered opposition from within the Red Cross. In 1925, Marquis Eaton, a prominent full-time volunteer from the Chicago Chapter, sent Boardman a heated letter that voiced his opposition to the project. He believed it was an unnecessary expense that would be especially detrimental to local ARC chapters. Eaton criticized the previous Civil War memorial building for being overly extravagant. He told Boardman it was “primarily a monument to your own courage, zeal, and wisdom.”<sup>304</sup> He feared that another memorial building would be a similarly selfish enterprise and he seemed to doubt its proposed utilitarian service mission. Eaton contended that if the national ARC solicited donations for this new memorial building, philanthropists would be less willing to donate to struggling local ARC chapters and to provide support to their service projects.<sup>305</sup>

Boardman quickly responded to Eaton’s letter with a fierce defense of the new Memorial Building.<sup>306</sup> To counter Eaton’s accusations that this living memorial building intended to house service activities was unnecessarily extravagant, she invoked ideas of patriotism and compared the situation to that of the Capitol Building. “We might house Congress in a building that cost a fraction of what the capitol cost in which they could have had as much space as they have in that building,” she

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<sup>303</sup> Letter from Arthur Woods to Hon. Eliot Wadsworth, July 24, 1923, Folder: 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box No. 429, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>304</sup> Letter from Marquis Eaton to Boardman June 9, 1925, Folder: 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box 429, RG: 200, NACP.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Letter June 11, 1925 from Mabel Boardman to Marquis Eaton, p. 1, Folder: 481.7 World War Memorial General, Box 429, RG 200, NACP.

quipped, “but I wonder if any patriotic United States citizen would like to see Congress in a cheaply constructed building.”<sup>307</sup> Boardman saw frugality when housing important national service organizations as unpatriotic. She also doubted that the Memorial Building would really deflect significant amounts of money from local chapters, especially since it housed projects aimed at supporting the service work of these very same local chapters.<sup>308</sup>

Boardman also defended the project because it commemorated the services of women in the World War, something Eaton ignored in his criticism. She argued that “many people have a feeling that they would like to show some appreciation for all that the women suffered and all they have done during the war.”<sup>309</sup> Eaton’s opposition demonstrated how Boardman had to justify a women’s memorial to those who perhaps still did not believe women had earned a place in American military memory. Although the service activities accommodated in the building were supposed to form a vital of the project, this service mission and the women the building commemorated sometimes became overshadowed by the controversies and challenges commonly encountered by memorial projects.

### *The Architecture of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War*

Built of white Vermont marble in the neo-classical tradition with Beaux-Arts influences, the exterior of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 2.

mirrored the aesthetics of turn-of-the-century Washington D.C. civic architecture, even as it held women's service activities within its walls. This style mimicked nearby buildings such as the Daughters of the American Revolution's Memorial Continental Hall and the Pan American Union Building.<sup>310</sup> This architectural choice legitimized the Memorial Building and cemented its purpose into the city's landscape.<sup>311</sup>

The successful architectural and landscape design of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and the flourishing of the City Beautiful movement until around the 1920s, inspired American designers to seek a national urban aesthetic that aimed for unity and beauty in buildings, green spaces, and city planning.<sup>312</sup> This aesthetic included a new appreciation for classicism. Classicism had inspired American designers and Washington D.C. architecture since the early republic, when the aesthetics of Ancient Rome and Greece were deemed the most appropriate for the new democratic American republic.<sup>313</sup> With the emergence of the American Renaissance in the 1880s as the United States experienced imperial ambitions and a

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<sup>310</sup> The Pan American Union Building (1910), barely one block from the ARC Headquarters, is an excellent example of a neoclassical-inspired beaux arts civic building. For a detailed analysis of the neoclassical and beaux arts influences on architect Paul Cret's design for the Pan American Union Building see: Elizabeth Grossman, *The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 26-64. The Headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution at Memorial Continental Hall (1905), located directly next to the ARC Headquarters is also an excellent example of Beaux Arts neoclassicism. Daughters of the American Revolution, "About DAR: National Headquarters Washington D.C." *National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution* <<http://www.dar.org/natsociety/headquarters.cfm>> (2 November 2013).

<sup>311</sup> Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 6-7, 378-383.

<sup>312</sup> Tompkins, *A Quest for Grandeur: Charles Moore and the Federal Triangle*, viii-ix.

<sup>313</sup> Livio Sacchi, "Jefferson & Co.: The Influence of the Italian Architectural Culture in Washington D.C. and Virginia," in *The Italian Legacy in Washington D.C.: Architecture, Design, Art, and Culture*, edited by Luca Molinari and Andrea Canepari (Milano, Italy: Skira Editore, 2007), 25.

flowering of culture at home, classicism came into favor again as the European Beaux Arts movement became popular.<sup>314</sup>

In the midst of these turn of the century aesthetic trends, Washington D.C. underwent an architectural transformation with the formation of the Senate Park Commission tasked with expanding Pierre L'Enfant's vision for the city.<sup>315</sup> Inspired by the Columbian Exposition, the Commission created the McMillan plan to re-develop the city along the lines of L'Enfant's original designs.<sup>316</sup> Several of the Exposition's designers, including Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmstead Jr., and Charles McKim served on the Commission and infused the McMillan plan with influences from the Columbian Exposition and the City Beautiful movement. This resulted in the continued dominance of classicism in the city's design, but with the addition of parks, landscape features, and infrastructural improvements.<sup>317</sup> In 1910, the success of the McMillan plan inspired Congress to create the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) to protect the plan's careful vision for the city.<sup>318</sup>

The designs of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, and of the earlier Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War, were directly influenced by the City Beautiful Movement, the McMillan Plan, and the CFA. The ARC Headquarters occupied a prime location near key elements of the city such as

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<sup>314</sup> Richard Guy Wilson, "American Renaissance: Charles McFollen McKim and the Aesthetic Ideal," in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, edited by Nathan Glazer and Cynthia R. Field (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 32-33; Cynthia R. Field, "When Dignity and Beauty Were the Order of the Day: The Contribution of Daniel H. Burnham," in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, 42-43.

<sup>315</sup> Nathan Glazer, "Introduction," in *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, 1.

<sup>316</sup> Tompkins, viii-ix.

<sup>317</sup> Wilson, 35-36; Field, 48-49.

<sup>318</sup> Tompkins, xvii.

the National Mall, the White House, and the emerging Federal Triangle. The site was surrounded by similar neoclassical Beaux Arts buildings as well as the new First Division Memorial, dedicated to that division's World War One service.<sup>319</sup> Any building on the site needed to fit into the surrounding aesthetics to assert its political importance in relation to this powerful neighborhood and the rest of the downtown area.

The prestigious New York architectural firm Trowbridge and Livingston designed both of the ARC memorial buildings to embody the aesthetics of the newly redesigned capital city.<sup>320</sup> Although known best for designing the Saint Regis Hotel in New York, Trowbridge and Livingston also designed public buildings and they often worked in the Beaux Arts and neo-Federal styles popular in the nation's capital at the time.<sup>321</sup>

The exterior elements of the building typify neoclassical Beaux Arts public buildings. Rectangular in shape with a flat roof, the building's front façade faces north on E Street and contains the main entrance, accessed by a staircase flanked on each side by two memorial lamps (figures 2.1 and 2.13).<sup>322</sup> This staircase leads to a narrow porch that runs almost the entire length of the façade and is adorned with eight fluted columns topped with Ionic capitals, above which is engraved "In Memory

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<sup>319</sup> The creation of the Federal Triangle, not far from the ARC Headquarters, represented a concerted effort to incorporate the ideals of the City Beautiful movement into new federal buildings in D.C. Examples include the Department of Commerce Building and the Ariel Arios Building. See: Tompkins, *A Quest for Grandeur: Charles Moore and the Federal Triangle*.

<sup>320</sup> Adolf F. Placzek, *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (London, UK: The Free Press, 1982), 228-230.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. Partner Breck Trowbridge studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in addition to founding and serving twice as President of the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects in New York

<sup>322</sup> McAlester, 378-379.

of the Heroic Women of the World War.”<sup>323</sup> A balustrade above the inscription also runs the length of the porch. The fenestration of the front facade composes eight windows on the lower level and nine windows on the upper level. The sides of the building each contain basement entrances below a decorative four-columned porch and include the Red Cross symbol above their northernmost window, although it is unclear if these Red Cross decorations were originally part of the building (figure 2.14).<sup>324</sup> The rear façade, which faces south, features just eight decorative pilasters that go from the second to the third story (figure 2.15).



Figure 2.13: Detail, front façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. May 31, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

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<sup>323</sup> McAlester, 180-185; field work by the author 31 May 2013.

<sup>324</sup> “Guided Tour of American Red Cross National Headquarters.”



Figure 2.14: East façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.



Figure 2.15: South (back) façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War with the Jane Delano Memorial in the foreground, Washington D.C. May 31, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The placement of the World War Building behind the Civil War Building on E Street, and its more simplistic design compared to the Civil War building, established a hierarchy of memorial buildings at the headquarters complex, with the Civil War Building taking the highest place.<sup>325</sup> Symbolically, this indicated that although the ARC believed the World War and women's roles in it to be important enough to include in their commemorative compound, they did not intend for the World War to take precedence over the memory of the Civil War. They constructed the World War Building both literally and figuratively in the shadow of the Civil War Building, an appropriate physical representation of the way that the female memory-makers of World War One followed in the footsteps of the women who commemorated the Civil War. While the Civil War building housed the ARC headquarters and offices, the new World War building took the utilitarian service aspect of living memorial buildings one step further by using it as a space for more practical, hands-on service work. Built only thirteen years apart by some of the same leaders, including Boardman, the World War building continued the ARC's efforts to commemorate women at their headquarters through service buildings, a choice that enabled them to establish a facility for women's work in the nation's capital.<sup>326</sup>

The exterior of the World War Building served a dual memorial purpose as it included individual memorials, a feature not included on the Civil War Building.

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<sup>325</sup> For a discussion of how hierarchies of memorials are used in a cultural landscape see: Grossman, 119-143; 119.

<sup>326</sup> For studies of women's commemorations of the Civil War see the following: Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*; Mills and Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*; Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations & the Lost Cause*.



Known for imaginatively using architectural details, Trowbridge and Livingston suggested that the columns on various parts of the new building's exterior and interior be dedicated to specific groups and individuals by engraving their names on the bases (figures 2.16 and 2.17).<sup>327</sup> All but one of the columns on the building's front and side facades received such special dedications. These columns enabled the memorial fund to acquire more revenue to support the construction of the building and its service mission, since the committee required a monetary donation to dedicate a column. The columns each became a memorial and transformed the building's exterior into a multi-layered commemorative structure that served as the epicenter of the commemoration of women's contributions to the war and created a home for women's continued service work.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Mabel Boardman, "The Columns," *Red Cross Courier*, 1 February 1928, Folder: 481.73 Memorials-Inscriptions, Box 428, RG 200, NACP; "Trowbridge and Livingston."

<sup>328</sup> Two interior columns also served as memorials.



Figure 2.16: Front foyer with the interior memorial columns and a portrait of Jane Delano. Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.



Figure 2.17: Detail of the column dedicated to the women of the YMCA and YWCA, east façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. The inscription reads: "To the Women with the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A." August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The diversity of the column dedications demonstrated the range of ways that women aided the war effort and reflected a cross-section of American society. Organizations featured on columns included the women of the YMCA, the YWCA, the Catholic War Council, the Jewish Welfare Board, and the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense, to name just a few (see figure 2.17).<sup>329</sup> These columns represented the only inclusion of anything religious in the building. Local tributes were popular and included a column given by the men of Houston, Texas, to commemorate the women of their city, a column dedicated to the women of the model workroom of the New York County Chapter of the ARC, and a column dedicated to the women of the District of Columbia Chapter of the ARC who ran building's service projects.<sup>330</sup> Also represented were the Grey Ladies, nurses at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington D.C.<sup>331</sup>

As with most commemorations of women during the Great War, motherhood formed a prominent theme in the memorial, an appropriate choice for an organization advertised during the war as "The World's Greatest Mother."<sup>332</sup> The American Legion purchased a column in tribute to the American mothers who lost sons in the war, demonstrating their approval of the building.<sup>333</sup> By singling out mothers as worthy of commemoration, the American Legion helped to legitimize their losses as national sacrifices and supported a new iteration of republican motherhood that revered American mothers for bearing sons for military service.

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<sup>329</sup> Boardman, "The Columns."

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Pamphlet about WOSL dedicating column, Women's Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri., pg. 2.

<sup>332</sup> Wartime propaganda posters depicted the ARC as "The World's Greatest Mother." Irwin 86.

<sup>333</sup> Boardman, "The Columns."

The mother of John Boyd Wolverton, an only son killed in the war, used her son's insurance money to dedicate a column on his behalf in honor of American women.<sup>334</sup> As opposed to keeping the insurance money for herself, she donated this column and used the money to honor her son's memory, her sister American women, and to fund the service work housed in the structure. Because the column she dedicated was a type of physical memorial, her donation did not completely eschew traditional memorialization trends; it represented a compromise between creating a permanent physical memorial to her son and American women, and her desire to help fund the creation of this living memorial building that would facilitate women's service.

Mabel Boardman even received a column in her honor that inscribed her service to the Red Cross and the Memorial Building into its very stones.<sup>335</sup> Additionally, the two lamps that flanked the front staircase were dedicated to Boardman by the National Committee on Red Cross Volunteer Service (figure 2.18). The inscription on these memorial lamps noted that they were intended to "carry on the light of her service for the sick and wounded of war and for those who suffer from disasters."<sup>336</sup> For better or worse, these lamps embodied the building's mission in the persona and achievements of Mabel Boardman, the individual in charge of the project and its most public face. By placing these lamps at the building's entrance, Boardman received a memorial deification that cemented her contentious status in the ARC and her personal devotion to service into the Memorial Building.

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Fieldwork by the author, 31 May 2013.



Figure 2.18: Memorial lamp dedicated to Mabel Boardman located on the eastern end of the front façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. May 31, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The addition of these individualized memorial columns and lamps established the World War Building as a platform for memorialization, a *lieux de mémoire* that included individual memorials as part of a collective attempt to create a living memorial building that contained spaces dedicated to women's work. The building constituted a multi-faceted and multi-purpose monument that consolidated what might otherwise have been geographically scattered individual memorials onto one site devoted to service projects. These individual tributes mimicked the popular custom of engraving the names of World War casualties on memorials. Although the Memorial Building as a whole eschewed the individuality of the casualty lists popularly inscribed on many contemporary memorials dedicated to specific units or regions, the columns and lamps included an option for those who wanted to join the

collective spirit and service mission of the building, but still wanted to specifically honor an individual or a group.

The column dedications represented a visible halfway point between traditional statuary memorialization and veteranist-commemorations. The funds raised through the donation of these individual memorial columns supported the creation of the building and facilitated its service mission, transforming the donation of these aesthetically conservative columns into a philanthropic act. These columns exemplified how the ARC's attempt to create a living memorial building devoted to service enabled the organization to avoid making a total commitment to pure veteranist-commemorations.

With these compromises, the ARC tried to redefine the parameters of commemoration in interwar America. The ARC attempted to demonstrate that permanent physical memorials could co-exist and be combined with more ephemeral acts of service. They argued that memorial buildings could be aesthetically pleasing and also incorporate important service work within their walls. Through their innovative memorial columns, the ARC contended that architectural elements of memorial buildings could be singled out as individual memorials that honored individuals as part of a collective memorial structure. They professed that donating to a living memorial building could be considered an act of service since the donations enabled the building's construction and facilitated the service projects that would take place inside. Through this endeavor, the ARC blurred the boundaries that separated service projects from statues and tried to show how they could be combined to create a lasting, meaningful, beneficial, and even beautiful memorial. By centralizing and

consolidating these memorials to women onto one site in the nation's capital, the organizers of the building made a deliberate choice. They intended to convey to the nearby government officials the importance of women's wartime contributions and their continued national service.<sup>337</sup> Despite their intentions, all female veteranist-commemorators did not agree with them, and some viewed the project's attempted compromise as a failure.

### *The Blank Column and the Women's Overseas Service League*

Although many organizations and individuals embraced the idea of the column dedications, one important women's organization, the Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL). When initially approached with the opportunity to donate money to dedicate a column, the WOSL sent a pamphlet to its members that described the offer and the \$5,000 likely needed to pay for the column, and action that generated great debate within the League.<sup>338</sup> In June 1923, National President Louise Wells wrote to Boardman, herself a WOSL member, to explain why the WOSL decided not to donate a column yet. Wells had listened to the WOSL chapters' opinions on the offer and learned that:

There was overwhelming sentiment to the effect that for the present at least our best memorial to the dead would be our service to the living. The San Francisco Unit, backed up by others from California have brought us a most challenging appeal to help in caring for the many disabled ex-service women on the Pacific Coast and elsewhere.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Wingate, "Doughboys, Art Worlds, and Identities: Sculpted Memories of World War I in the United States" and Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America's World War I Memorials*.

<sup>338</sup> Pamphlet about WOSL dedicating column, pg.1.

<sup>339</sup> "Letter from Louise Wells to Mabel Boardman," Folder: 481.73 Memorials-Inscriptions, Box428: 481.13 Main Building & Grounds-Alterations Rebuilding & Relocating, RG 200, NACP.

The WOSL believed that the best way to commemorate the war was through direct service to its survivors. Even though the project was led by a WOSL member and would take the form of a living memorial building that housed ARC service activities, that was not enough for the League since too much money was needed for its construction. This money could have been channeled directly into service activities that made a more immediate impact on those who needed help. Wells noted that this decision did not preclude future involvement with the project and was only for the present time.<sup>340</sup>

The issue came up again four years later during the 1927 WOSL National Convention. During the convention, the WOSL passed a resolution that more formally declined Boardman's standing invitation for WOSL to participate in the Memorial Building.<sup>341</sup> The WOSL publicly declared their gratitude to the ARC and tried to maintain friendly ties with them, since many WOSL members had served with the ARC during the war and many of the project's leaders such as Boardman and Lucy Minnigerode were WOSL members.<sup>342</sup> The issue finally came to a head in February 1929 when WOSL National President Lena Hitchcock responded to yet another invitation from Boardman. This time, Boardman offered an indoor column dedicated to the WOSL women who died overseas, and once again the WOSL

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> NARA II Box: RG 200 National Archives Gift Collection Records of the American National Red Cross 1917-1934 481.13 Main Building & Grounds-Alterations Rebuilding & Relocating 481.7 D.C. Chapter House Box No. 428 Folder: 481.73 Memorials-Inscriptions.

<sup>342</sup> Boardman and Minnigerode's names appear in several membership rosters of the WOSL. Box 1922-1932 and Box: 1933-1939, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.



declined.<sup>343</sup> Hitchcock cited organizational restraints that prevented the League from raising money from local units to pay for the column.<sup>344</sup> The WOSL National Treasury barely had sufficient funds to cover their regular business needs, save money for the organization's disabled women, and help care for the women in the Soldiers' Home at Danville, Illinois, where they had started a new occupational therapy program for the female residents to sell handicrafts to help support themselves.<sup>345</sup> As discussed in chapter one, these service projects aimed at helping female veterans formed the core of the WOSL's mission. With such expenses, Hitchcock did not have the funds to purchase the column, nor could she raise the dues that WOSL members paid to the national organization.<sup>346</sup>

In 1929, as in 1923 and 1927, the WOSL still considered its most important function to be service activities that helped former overseas women. Because the Memorial Building commemorated many women who were WOSL members, Hitchcock again emphasized their gratitude. She explained that they were not "inappreciative of your kindness and genuine interest in the League in giving us this opportunity. As it is, I feel that our own service work will have to be the only memorial which will ever be erected to these women."<sup>347</sup> Eager to maintain good relations with her sisters at the ARC, Hitchcock insinuated that both organizations had the same goal of commemorating women's wartime service but were approaching it from different angles. The WOSL Washington D.C. unit even sent ten

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<sup>343</sup> "Letter to Mabel Boardman from Lena Hitchcock," Folder: 481.73 Memorials-Inscriptions, Box 428, 481.13 Main Building & Grounds-Alterations Rebuilding & Relocating, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

members to the building's cornerstone dedication ceremony and many WOSL members attended the building's 1930 dedication. *Carry On* featured a lengthy article about the building's dedication ceremony that thanked Boardman for giving them "the opportunity of having a share in this 'living memorial.'"<sup>348</sup> Although they respected the building's mission, the WOSL considered direct service towards veterans to be the only memorial they needed to commemorate women's roles in the war, while the ARC believed in their attempt to compromise with a living memorial building that housed service activities. By the end of the 1920s, the WOSL supported an almost entirely service-based approach to commemoration that contrasted with the ARC's endeavor to compromise between veteranist-commemorations and statuary memorials.

These diverging opinions about the best way to commemorate women's service in the First World War exemplified the ongoing debate during the interwar period about the proper form of commemoration, even among female veteranist-commemorators. The WOSL valued pure service over any type of physical memorial; although the memorial building housed service activities, they could not be convinced to spare funds from their own service projects to support a plan that did not directly aid veterans. By combining elements of traditional monuments with a building that lodged service activities, the ARC tried to compromise between the different memorial options being debated by Americans. The overlapping membership of the WOSL and the ARC demonstrated how even women who belonged to the same

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<sup>348</sup> *Carry On* Vol. VII, No. 3, Aug 1928, pg. 30; *Carry On* Vol. IX, No. 2, May 1930, pg. 7-8, MS 22, Box 37, The Women's Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

organizations and pursued veteranist-commemorations disagreed about the best way to conduct their work. This highlights the complicated layers of discourse as American women reshaped commemorations and shows how there was no definitive end to traditional memorials, just an overall reconfiguring of commemoration.

As one of the premier organizations that represented women who served overseas in the war, the WOSL's refusal to participate left the Memorial Building somewhat incomplete and indicated that some female veteranist-commemorators deemed its compromise to be unsuccessful. Indeed, the southernmost column on the building's west façade remains blank today, perhaps intended to be used as the WOSL column (figure 2.19). Although the ARC's compromise appeased many factions, Boardman's continued attempts to gain the WOSL's support signified that their refusal to participate represented a failure of the ARC's planning committee. Although the building did house service activities for many years, especially during the Second World War, perhaps Louise Wells and Lena Hitchcock were right and the building did not focus enough on service work.<sup>349</sup> Today, the building's service mission has been almost lost and forgotten; it is filled with ARC administrative offices instead of rooms devoted to community service projects and research. In 1953, the District of Columbia Chapter vacated the structure and moved to a new office nearby on E Street, divorcing the building from its original service purpose.<sup>350</sup> The

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<sup>349</sup> Minutes of the Twenty-Fifth Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, "Report on the Collections of Uniforms of Women Worn During the Great War, 1914-1918," 60; Folder: NSCDA Report; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>350</sup> "American Red Cross Headquarters Designated Historical Landmark," June 15, 1966, pg. 2, Folder: "ARC Buildings-Civil War Memorial," Box: ARC Buildings and Memorials, American Red Cross National Headquarters Archive, Washington D.C.

memorial building is best known now for the Clara Barton Café located in its basement where ARC workers and others eat lunch, oblivious to the building's rich history and its nearly abandoned service purpose.



Figure 2.19: Detail of the blank column, west façade of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, Washington D.C. August 16, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

The blank column may also indicate that some female veteranist-commemorators, like many WOSL leaders, almost fully rejected the idea of traditional memorials in the aftermath of an untraditional war that altered humanity in unthinkable violent ways. Still facing the reality of the women and men whose lives were irrevocably damaged by the new mechanized warfare, some members of the WOSL might have seen physical memorials of any kind to be useless. Even though living memorial buildings housed service activities, they still required vast construction funds that could have been used directly for service. Aesthetically, the

Memorial Building represented a very traditional neo-classical architectural style, and no component of the building was more traditional than its columns. Perhaps the WOSL leadership felt that such a traditional architectural component could not embody the memory of a war that killed and maimed so many people in new and horrible ways.

As the world reeled from the devastation of the war, some artists, especially in Europe, lashed out against traditional aesthetics and created art that reflected the destruction of the Great War.<sup>351</sup> Composed of many rank and file women who served overseas, many WOSL members had come face to face with the realities of the battlefields. After witnessing these scenes, perhaps some WOSL women, like some artists, could no longer use traditional aesthetic forms to commemorate the war, but saw tangible service and an attempt at healing as the only meaningful and productive ways to honor those who did not survive and those who still suffered.

Yet other WOSL women like Boardman and the ARC members who supported the Delano statue still clung to aspects of traditional commemorations even as they pursued and supported veteranist-commemorations, often through the WOSL as members.<sup>352</sup> The disagreement and debate that occurred among the WOSL's

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<sup>351</sup> For a description of the war's influence on art see Chapter 6 in Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*.

<sup>352</sup> Although Boardman did travel to France and Italy in 1918, it is not likely that she witnessed the horrors of the war to the same extent of the rank and file ARC workers closer to the battle lines. Although she described sensing the horrors of war upon her arrival in France, her letters to her mother from Europe described her activities as focused on inspection tours, meetings, and social events with other prominent Americans helping in Europe. She only occasionally left Paris and Rome and did not venture anywhere near the embattled areas of either country. Irwin, 137. Box 8, Mabel Thorp Boardman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Mabel Thorp Boardman Collection, Letters from Mabel Boardman to her Mother April 9, 1918-May 9, 1918, American Red Cross Historical Biography, Boardman, Mabel: Miscellaneous Material, American Women's War Relief 1914, American National Red Cross Headquarters Archive, Washington D.C.

members demonstrates the messy and impartial cultural transformation of commemoration after the First World War. It further substantiates one scholar's assertion that dichotomizing the cultural history of the First World War as either traditional or modern is no longer useful, for "the overlap of languages and approaches between the old and new, the 'traditional' and the 'modern', the conservative and the iconoclastic, was apparent both during and after the war."<sup>353</sup> Such an overlap between the old and the new, and between service and statue, occurred amongst the intersecting membership of the WOSL and the ARC as they tried to balance commemoration with carrying on their wartime service. As a result, the ARC's attempted living memorial building could not please all female veteranist-commemorators, and some, like the WOSL, deemed the project a failure, while others praised its endeavor to forge a middle-ground.

#### *Conclusion: Presenting the Building to the Public*

The ceremony for the laying of the building's cornerstone, held on May 31, 1928, represented a milestone moment in the campaign to construct the Memorial Building. The Marine Band played to a crowd of over one thousand people as President Calvin Coolidge spread the first trowel of mortar for the building's cornerstone.<sup>354</sup> Chief Justice and former President Taft acted as the ceremony's presiding officer and Secretary of War Dwight F. Davis accepted the building on behalf of the nation.<sup>355</sup> With an eye toward history and posterity, a time-capsule box was placed in the

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<sup>353</sup> Winter, 3, 2-5.

<sup>354</sup> "Cornerstone Laid for Women's World War Memorial," Folder: 481.73 Laying of Cornerstone Dedication Ceremony General Correspondence, Box 429, RG 200, NACP.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

cornerstone and filled with memorabilia associated with the ARC, the ceremony, and the organizations in which women participated during the war.<sup>356</sup>

At the building's completion ceremony on March 19, 1930, General Pershing presented the building to President Herbert Hoover, who accepted it on behalf of the nation along with First Lady Lou Henry Hoover, a WOSL member. The day was spent unveiling the various memorial columns and lamps that adorned the building (figures 2.20, 2.21, 2.22).<sup>357</sup> Each dedication at these individual monuments added to the sense that the building served as the physical and aesthetic focal point of the commemoration of American women's roles in the Great War.



Figure 2.20: President Herbert Hoover and First Lady Lou Henry Hoover, a WOSL member, lay a wreath at the dedication of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, 1930. RG 200, NACP.

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<sup>356</sup> "List of Articles to go in Corner Stone box of Red Cross Memorial Building to the Women of the World War," Folder: 481.73 Laying of Cornerstone Dedication Ceremony, Box 429, RG 200 1917-1934, NACP.

<sup>357</sup> "Press release March 19, 1930: President Hoover Accepts World War Memorial to Women from General Pershing," Folder: 481.73 Laying of Cornerstone Dedication Ceremony, Box 429, RG 200, NACP; "Press release March 15, 1930: Memorial to Women of World War to be Dedicated Wednesday," pg.1, Folder: 481.73 Laying of Cornerstone Dedication Ceremony, Box 429, RG 200, NACP.



Figure 2.21: “Unveiling Am. Legion Column World War Memorial (E Street Building).” 1930. General Pershing is on the left side of the column with ARC nurses behind him. RG 200, NACP.

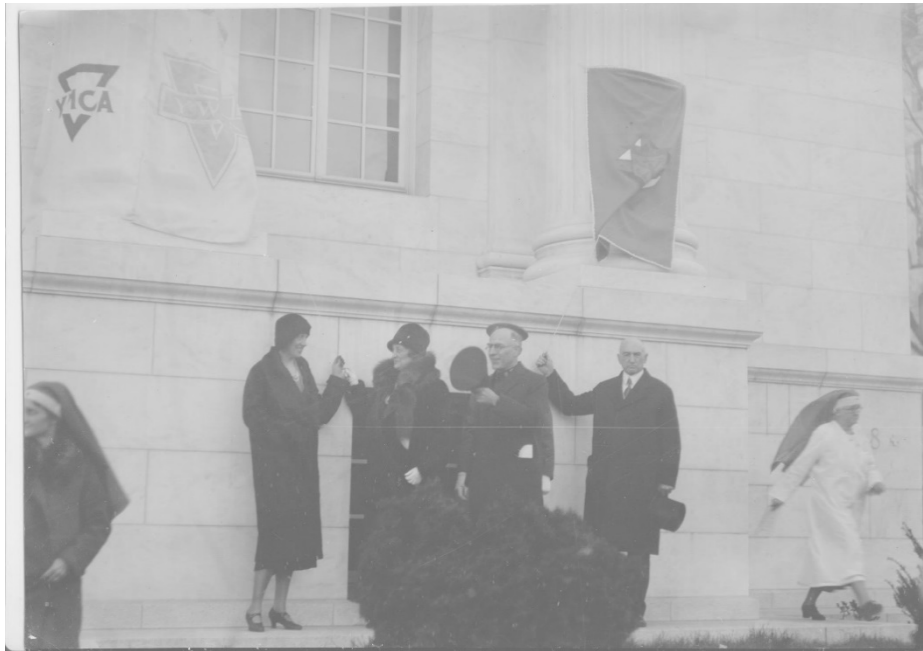


Figure 2.22: Unveiling the columns dedicated to the YMCA, YWCA, and Knights of Columbus, 1930. RG 200, NACP.



The architecture of the Memorial Building transformed it into a multipurpose living memorial. Reading this building with an eye to its multiple uses demonstrates the creativity of its designers, Trowbridge and Livingston Architects, and the ARC. Rather than limit themselves to one type of memorial such as a column, statue, or living memorial building, the architects combined elements of traditional monuments with utilitarian memorials to create a structure that contained layers of meaning and symbolism. The building took inspiration from the memorial buildings begun just before the World War such as the Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War and brought the idea to full fruition by specifically designating spaces for service work in the building's floorplans. By continuing the ARC's foray into living memorials, the new World War building demonstrated that many women in the ARC believed their hybrid service memorial to be an appropriate way to commemorate women's wartime contributions. But because the building did not focus enough on direct service, other veteranist-commemorators, especially many members of the WOSL, deemed this compromise a failure and did not agree with the ARC that the project produced an effective living memorial building.

The Memorial Building's attempt to facilitate women's service work continued the custom of women's Progressive era activities, and tried to prevent commemoration from completely overshadowing the world's needs in the wake of the Great War, even if some women did not think it succeeded in doing so. It endeavored to ensure that the legacy of American women's wartime services and sacrifices would stand in the nation's capital as a powerful reminder of what women had done for the nation. So close to the White House and the State, War, and Navy

Building, such a reminder was needed as newly enfranchised women looked for novel ways to serve their country and fulfill the duties of citizenship. For American mothers in particular, their inclusion in the Memorial Building justified their assertion that they had served the nation as 'war mothers' of service members while they created their own niche for national service based on that belief.

### Chapter 3: “Let Us Take Up the Torch Individually and Collectively”: The American War Mothers and Veteranist-Commemorations

In 1935 or 1936, a headline in a Mobile, Alabama, area newspaper resurrected the memory of the First World War by highlighting the mothers of the men who fought in the war. The headline read: “U.S. Doughboys Did the Fighting But Mothers Really Won the War, Says Soldier Who Came Back.”<sup>358</sup> The article covered a recent event in Mobile’s Lyons Park when the Mobile chapter of the American War Mothers planted a live-oak tree to commemorate their children who served in the First World War. At the ceremony, Mobile’s mayor, Cecil F. Bates, a veteran of the war himself, praised American mothers for their wartime service. He exclaimed that “it was the heroic mother who furnished the inspiration and really won the war—it was the thought of them that encouraged and strengthened our soldiers.”<sup>359</sup> As opposed to idealizing battle or his fellow veterans, Bates honored American mothers, a wise choice in the 1930s when the First World War was a source of disillusionment and still under public scrutiny.

This public celebration of the services and sacrifices of American mothers during World War One, and the organization’s act of community service in planting a

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<sup>358</sup> “U.S. Doughboys Did the Fighting But Mothers Really Won the War, Says Soldier Who Came Back,” n.d., no newspaper name, in: Scrapbook “History of American War Mothers From Oct 1933 to September 1935. Assembled by National Historian Mrs. J.E. Wilcox of Bancroft, Kansas.” No folder, no box, American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

memorial tree to beautify this park, epitomized the veteranist-commemoration mission of the American War Mothers (AWM). Founded in 1917 to unite mothers of service members in support of the war effort, after the war, the AWM embraced veteranist-commemorations. Because the American War Mothers asserted that they had served the nation during the war, their approach to commemoration emphasized the importance of continuing that service in the postwar era. They believed that their roles as mothers required them to focus their commemorative efforts on serving the nation by helping veterans and other war mothers, rather than only building monuments. The AWM embraced the platform of veteranist-commemorations promoted by other women's groups such as the WOSL and the American Red Cross who also navigated the contentious interwar commemorative culture. As the AWM pursued veteranist-commemorations and helped to pioneer a new form of memorialization, they grappled with race, the peace movement, and the economic struggles of the Great Depression.

### *A Brief History of the American War Mothers*

Alice Moore French organized the American War Mothers during the First World War (figure 3.1). After her only child, Donald, left to serve in the war in 1917, she responded to the request of the Indiana section of appointees to the U.S. Food Administration for the mother of an Indiana soldier to help collect signatures for a

Food Pledge Campaign.<sup>360</sup> A widow active in women's clubs and civic life, Mrs. French used her new position to form the Indiana War Mothers, an organization she created to unite mothers of service members in support of the war effort and as advocates for their children's welfare.<sup>361</sup> The Indiana War Mothers completed their constitution in April 1918, and in the fall of that year they wrote a national constitution that expanded their Indiana organization into the national American War Mothers.<sup>362</sup> Article VII of this national constitution defined their group as a "non-political" organization that would not "promote the candidacy of any person seeking public office."<sup>363</sup> This clause helped them try to remain apolitical and inclusive of members so that their work would benefit the military and veterans and not one particular political party.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Elizabeth Cafer du Plessis, "Alice French, Indiana War Mothers: From World War I "Kitchen Soldiers" to Postwar Immigrant Reformers," 99-118; 101-102.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid, 102-103.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>363</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws, American War Mothers, Amended September 23, 1929," 5, in "American War Mothers First Annual Report Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Acceptance of Act of Incorporation 1925," 6, American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>364</sup> du Plessis, 106-109.



Figure 3.1: “1918-1921, Mrs. Alice French, Founder, Indianapolis, Indiana.” American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.

Incorporated by Congress on February 24, 1925, the American War Mothers evolved into a patriotic association focused on supporting veterans and commemorating the war.<sup>365</sup> Similar in its structure to the WOSL, the AWM consisted of national, state, and local chapters with the national level and its officers presiding over the other chapters.<sup>366</sup> The AWM held a national convention every two years and published a magazine titled “The American War Mother” that they sent free to dues paying members.<sup>367</sup> Committees at the national and lower levels of the organization included: the legislative committee, the hospitalization committee, the Americanization Committee, the Memory Tree Committee, the Gold Star Committee,

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<sup>365</sup> Pamphlet “Indiana Chapter of American War Mothers,” title page, Folder: American War Mothers 1951 Constitution & By-Laws, “ “ “ Indiana Chapter, C. 1951, Box: A-78, 76.268, American War Mothers Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>366</sup> “Constitution and By-Laws, American War Mothers, Amended September 23, 1929,” 7.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid, 11, 23-24.

the Welfare Committee, the Emblem and Memorial Markers Committee, the Child Welfare Committee, and the American War Mothers Memorial Home Committee, to name a few.<sup>368</sup>

Even though they attempted to remain apolitical, the AWM involved themselves in the contemporary debates over immigration, Americanization, the peace movement, and disarmament. They considered themselves to be partners with the American Legion, whose platforms of Americanization, and opposition to the recognition of Soviet Russia they supported (figure 3.2).<sup>369</sup> Although members did not always agree with each other, overall, the organization especially supported Americanization—the movement to acculturate immigrants to American customs—and efforts to promote world peace.<sup>370</sup> In particular, founder Alice French championed internationalism, supported the establishment of a “World Court” to prevent future conflicts, and became outspoken about her support for the peace movement.<sup>371</sup> She hoped that the AWM could help “find a way whereby our national and international differences would be settled other than by the blood of our precious sons.”<sup>372</sup> French advocated for peace for the rest of her life and incorporated support for peace into the AWM.

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid, 3, 12.

<sup>369</sup> “Three Objectives for Indiana War Mothers,” unlabeled newspaper, Folder 8: AWM Indiana Chapter Scrapbook 1921-26, M458, Box 1, Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>370</sup> du Plessis, 113-116.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>372</sup> “History of American War Mothers,” pg. 22, Folder: 7: History of American War Mothers, M458, Box: 1, Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society.



Figure 3.2: Back cover of “The Indianan,” Volume I, Number 10, July 1921. The caption aligns the AWM with the American Legion and its auxiliary. Papers of John J. Pershing. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

After the Armistice, the AWM shifted their focus from supporting the war effort to supporting veterans; they recognized that their organization could still play an important role in the nation. At the 1923 national convention, National President Mrs. H.H. McCluer reminded the organization that members had come “to this convention to help mold the future. And the boys and the friends who are gone, we know they see us this morning assembled to carry on what they have given us.”<sup>373</sup> McCluer believed that the AWM had a duty to carry on their wartime work by supporting veterans and honoring their children’s wartime service.

<sup>373</sup> “National American War Mothers Fourth Annual Convention, Kansas City, Missouri October, 1-4, 1923,” 2-3; no folder; no box; WIMSA.



The AWM's Constitution delineated their mission of community service and patriotic support of the nation, its armed forces, and veterans. It declared that their mission was to:

keep alive and develop the spirit that prompted world service; to maintain the ties of fellowship of that service and to assist and further any patriotic work; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the State, and Nation; to work for the welfare of the Army and Navy; to assist in any way in their power men and women who served and were wounded or incapacitated in the World War; to foster and promote friendship and understanding between American and the Allies in the World War.<sup>374</sup>

In addition to outlining their program of service to the nation, advocacy for veterans, and the fostering of good relations with the former Allies, this mission statement also indicated the commemorative aspects of these objectives. In starting this statement with the objective of keeping alive and developing "the spirit that prompted world service" and maintaining "the ties of fellowship" that developed during the World War, the AWM directly connected their mission to commemoration. Although they did not use the words commemoration or memorialization, these phrases indicated that they intended to memorialize the war through their projects.

The AWM constitution also explained the organization's membership requirements. Members had to be female citizens of the United States with a son or daughter of their own blood who served in the Army or Navy of the U.S. or its allies during the Great War between April 6, 1917, and November 11, 1918, and received an honorable discharge or were still in the service.<sup>375</sup> By limiting members to blood

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<sup>374</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws, American War Mothers, Amended September 23, 1929," 5.

<sup>375</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws, American War Mothers, Amended September 23, 1929," 6. Mothers of children who did not serve during the dates of official American participation were also excluded from becoming members even though mothers of such volunteers who served during the time of U.S. involvement were allowed.

mothers, the AWM restricted stepmothers and adoptive mothers from membership and privileged birth mothers as the only true war mothers. In keeping with their belief in Americanization, the exclusion of non-citizen mothers prevented many immigrant mothers from joining. This kept the organization dominated by middle and upper-class Christian mothers. It is also significant that a child's dishonorable discharge prevented their mother from becoming a member; this demonstrated that children had to conform to the military's definition of honorable service for their mother to join. The AWM did recognize that women had served in the war, and allowed mothers of daughters who met the requirements to become members, signifying that the AWM valued women's military service as equal to that of men, at least for the purposes of becoming a member.

When it came to race, the AWM did not view African-American mothers as equal to white mothers. Some African-American women were eventually allowed to join the organization, but only in separate, segregated "colored chapters," although the AWM Constitution did not mention segregation.<sup>376</sup> The issue of whether to include African-American war mothers emerged early in the organization's postwar existence at the 1921 convention.<sup>377</sup> During an open discussion at the convention, an unnamed delegate asked President Alice French whether "a colored woman is eligible to become a war mother. We had colored boys in the war. It has been asked me, and I wondered if they would be allowed in, or if they would have a chapter of their

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<sup>376</sup> "Proceedings Tenth National Convention American War Mothers September 30-October 3, 1935, Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.," 82, no box, no folder, WIMSA.

<sup>377</sup> "Transcript of Proceedings: Second Biennial Convention of American War Mothers, 1921," 118-119.

own?”<sup>378</sup> This question touched on the central issue of how some Americans, especially minorities, viewed wartime military service as a way to attain full citizenship rights.

This issue sparked a heated debate at the convention as more members spoke up and revealed their differing views on the admission of African-American members. Mrs. Longbotham from Sacramento announced that her chapter had two black women as members, after which Mrs. Huffman, most likely from Kentucky, voiced her opposition to that policy.<sup>379</sup> Mrs. Huffman reminded the group how she had previously taken a message to the Washington convention that stated how they should use the term “white war mothers” in their Constitution.<sup>380</sup> She had urged that convention to:

let the colored war mothers have a chapter of their own, and they voted down my motion. And of course, we do not want them in the same organization, but you people can, unless you have your own State by-laws,--You can refuse the colored mothers, or you can admit them, if you want them in. That is part of our constitution.<sup>381</sup>

Although she failed to officially inscribe segregation into the AWM constitution, by disagreeing with the chapters who welcomed African-American members, Mrs. Huffman still tried to deny African-American mothers the same opportunities as white war mothers. Mrs. Digney, the incoming national president from White Plains,

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, 118. “Yearbook 1925-1927, Kentucky Chapter American War Mothers,” 3, Kentucky Historical Society Digital Collections, <<http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/RB/id/2754/rec/3>> (31 Jul 2014). This document lists a Mrs. Huffman as the Kentucky Chapter’s Fourth Vice President from 1926-1927 and as a member of the Constitution Committee for the Convention, indicating this is likely the same Mrs. Huffman.

<sup>380</sup> “Transcript of Proceedings: Second Biennial Convention of American War Mothers, 1921,” 118-119.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 118.

New York, agreed that at the Washington Convention it had been accepted that each state would be “governed by its own conditions, and we tabled the discussion of that question.”<sup>382</sup> In doing so, the AWM avoided a difficult and divisive decision. They allowed each state’s chapters to be directed by local racial conditions, which presumably meant that chapters in the Jim Crow south were segregated, if any African-American chapters formed in those states at all.

Dissatisfied with this situation, some members rekindled the debate and protested that by excluding African-Americans, the AWM denied them their status as American citizens. Mrs. Murray exclaimed that “I don’t think we should exclude them. The Government accepted the black soldiers, but they should be permitted to organize in their own way. But I don’t think we should draw the line. I don’t think it is a secular organization; it is a patriotic organization, and we should take every mother that has sent a boy.”<sup>383</sup> Mrs. Donald added how her chapter also had African-American members and noted that “they don’t conflict with us at all,” although they had never actually affiliated with the AWM, but still considered themselves members.<sup>384</sup> Sensing the tensions created by this discussion, Mrs. Norton from Sacramento asked the Convention “to please not discuss this question. Our colored mothers gave as we gave. We have gold star mothers among them. Let each state care for its own people. We Sacramento War Mothers are not afraid to stand upon our feet

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 119; Program “Dedication of Memory Trees,” Folder: 1460-50-80-50 Memorial Trees 8/1925 to 3/1932,

Box 67, RG 79: Records of the National Park Service, National Capital Region, Subject Files, 1924-1951, NACP.

<sup>383</sup> “Transcript of Proceedings: Second Biennial Convention of American War Mothers, 1921,” 119.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid, 119.

and say that we welcome the colored mother of any American man who served.”<sup>385</sup>

Even though she lauded her own chapter’s inclusion of African-American mothers, Mrs. Norton, like many of the other women that spoke up, did not advocate for this to become a national policy. She wanted to table the issue since she thought it divided the convention and distracted members from their mission; she was progressive, but not enough to persuade others to treat African-American mothers equally. Taking her cue, President French explained that someone had suggested that they have a question box available for attendees to submit questions about “knotty problems” rather than asking them on the floor and sidetracking the convention’s proceedings. The conservative decision to leave the choice to include African-American mothers to the individual units maintained the status quo and sanctioned segregation. This decision to table the issue of segregation, and the discussion surrounding it, demonstrated how female memory-makers did not always agree, even as they pursued the same goals within the same organization.

It seems that by handling the issue in this way, some African-American women were allowed to join the AWM and form their own segregated chapters. At least two segregated AWM chapters are known to have existed: the Lincoln Chapter in Washington D.C., and the Colonel Charles Young Chapter in Chicago, named for the third African-American graduate of the United States Military Academy and the first African-American officer to become a Colonel.<sup>386</sup> The proceedings of the 1935

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> “Army-Navy Union Groups Give Ball,” *The Washington Post*, 26 May 1935, pg. ST8, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Bertie L. Roberts, “Quincy Club Pays Honor To Officers” *The Chicago Defender*, 27 Aug 1938, pg. 17, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Chas. Young War Mothers Fete Friends” *The Chicago Defender*, 26 Oct 26 1940, pg. 4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Gold Star Mothers Given Unique Reminiscent Tea,” *The Chicago Defender*, 16 Oct 1937, pg. 15, ProQuest

convention in Washington D.C. recorded the attendance of Mrs. Louise A. Pinckney from Washington D.C.'s Lincoln Chapter. She addressed the convention and invited all the attendees to a banquet hosted by her chapter the next night in honor of past and present state and national presidents and "visiting colored delegates."<sup>387</sup> Held at the Whitelaw Hotel, the convention headquarters for the African-American members who were segregated from the main convention's headquarters at the Wardman Park Hotel, this banquet featured as its guest speaker the Special Assistant to the Secretary of War, Dr. Emmett J. Scott, a well-known African-American leader.<sup>388</sup> It also featured national president Mrs. Ochiltree and state president Mrs. Mary T. Shanahan.<sup>389</sup> This announcement indicated that African-American women gained some inclusion in the national conventions and that the Washington D.C. chapter was large enough to host a major banquet.

The African-American members of the AWM did not let the segregation of this convention's headquarters go unprotested. To highlight the racism at the

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Historical Newspapers; George Franklin Proctor, "An Old Lady (Dedicated to Col. Charles Young Chapter American War Mothers)" *The Chicago Defender*, 12 Mar 1938, pg. 16, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "War Mothers Receive Reports on Convention," *The Washington Post*, 12 Nov 1933, pg. F9, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. COL Young became a famous figure at the turn of the century and it is widely believed that discrimination prevented him from being sent to France during WWI. Jeffrey T. Sammons and John H. Morrow, Jr., *Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment & the African American Quest for Equality* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2014).

<sup>387</sup> "Proceedings Tenth National Convention, American War Mothers September 30-October 3, 1935 Wardman Park Hotel Washington, D.C.," pg. 82, unlabeled box, American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>388</sup> In 1919, Scott published *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War*. He also served for eighteen years as the private secretary to Booker T. Washington. Emmett J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (Chicago: Homewood Press, 1919); < <https://archive.org/details/scottsofficialhi00scot> > (3 February 2015).

<sup>389</sup> Ibid; "War Mothers Detail Events Of Conclave," *The Washington Post*, 22 Sep 1935, pg. G8, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "War Mothers Announce Features for Convention," *The Washington Post*, 15 Sep 1935, pg. ST6, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "War Mothers Announce Features for Convention," *The Washington Post*, 15 Sep 1935, pg. ST6, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

convention, *The Baltimore African-American* published a photograph of four members of the Colonel Charles Young Chapter who were refused admission to the general convention banquet at the Wardman Park Hotel with the caption: “Their Sons Died, but They Were Turned Down,” (figure 3.3).<sup>390</sup> The segregation of the banquet caused an outcry among the African-American convention delegates and members. In response, the African-American delegates did not invite the white delegates to their memorial services at Colonel Charles Young’s grave in Arlington National Cemetery. When they learned of this, white delegates were reported to have “expressed regret that they were not notified.”<sup>391</sup> The African-American delegates also brought the incident to the attention of the AWM’s leadership. *The Chicago Defender* reported that the members of the Colonel Charles Young Chapter discussed the convention’s segregation at their next meeting and received assurance from state officials that “such an un-American action would not occur again.”<sup>392</sup> By protesting their unfair treatment at the convention, these African-American women asserted their desire for equal treatment by their white colleagues and refused to accept the status quo that limited their participation in the conference.

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<sup>390</sup> “Their Sons Died, but They Were Turned Down,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 Oct 1935, pg. 5, ProQuest Historical Newspapers

<sup>391</sup> “Gold Star Mother Pays Respect to Deceased Heroes,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 Oct 1935, pg. 4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>392</sup> “American War Mothers,” *The Chicago Defender*, 21 Dec 1935, pg. 7, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



Figure 3.3: Photograph of the African-American members of the AWM segregated from the 1935 National Convention in Washington D.C. and denied admittance to the Wardman Park Hotel. The photograph was titled: “Their Sons Died, but They Were Turned Down,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 Oct 1935, pg. 5. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

African-American convention delegates further exposed the disagreements among white AWM members regarding segregation. While some white members refused to grant African-American members the opportunity to participate fully in the convention, other white members recognized this choice as “un-American;” they hoped to prevent such treatment in the future and they even wanted to honor an African-American war hero alongside the segregated chapters. While the African-American delegates protested their treatment at the convention, they also recognized the opportunities the AWM gave them that other organizations did not. As a 1934 article in *The Baltimore Afro-American* reported the year before the convention



incident took place, the American Gold Star Mothers organization did not include any African-American members. In an interview for this article, Mrs. Louise Pinkney noted how the AWM included African-American members in separate “colored chapters” and commented that “the colored groups receive every courtesy and attention accorded the whites. They have participated in all the affairs of the national organization, both national and local.”<sup>393</sup> She added that an African-American member from her own chapter “was the fifth in line to place a wreath on the Unknown Soldier’s grave at Arlington on Mother’s Day” and that Mrs. George Seibold, the white founder of the American Gold Star Mothers, “always invited the members of the Lincoln chapter to attend its affairs.” According to Mrs. Pinckney, the current president of that group had not yet invited these African-American women to an event, an indication that she might not have been as liberal as her predecessor.<sup>394</sup> This situation typified the discord within the AWM and the larger community of female veteranist-commemorators about race: some chapters allowed African-American members, while others did not, but tolerated how the national organization allowed them to form segregated chapters. In fact, Alice French actually granted a charter to an AWM chapter composed of Native American women at Fort Yates, North Dakota, another hint that the organization’s racial policies varied widely.<sup>395</sup>

The AWM’s struggle to define their racial policies indicated an increasing awareness of race among female veteranist-commemorators, even though the AWM

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<sup>393</sup> “Jim Crow Revealed in Group of War Mothers,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 Jun 1934, pg. 20, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> “Scrapbook,” Folder 10: Scrapbook, handwritten with photographs and clippings, M458, Box: 1, Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

ultimately adhered to the strictures of segregation. Similar to other women's service organizations in the interwar period such as the WOSL, the American Red Cross, and the YWCA, the AWM could not ignore racial issues.<sup>396</sup> The dissenting opinions about race within the AWM, and their open arguments about segregation, demonstrated that although they were bound together by some aspects of the same mission, female veteranist-commemorators subscribed to a variety of different beliefs and attitudes, and often disagreed about the best way to execute their mission.

### *Motherhood as Wartime Service*

The AWM pursued veteranist-commemorations because they defined their roles as mothers of military members as a form of wartime service and they believed it was their duty to continue that service after the war. Veteranist-commemorations provided the organization with a way to honor their children's wartime contributions and continue to support military members and especially veterans. It enabled the AWM to create more space for women's continued assistance to the armed forces and to act as civic leaders in their communities.

The ideology of "republican motherhood" and contemporary cultural conceptions of motherhood were central to the mission of the AWM and informed their belief that as mothers they had contributed to the war effort. From the time of the early republic, American women had been encouraged to support the nation through "republican motherhood" by raising their children to become patriotic

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<sup>396</sup> During the interwar era, the YWCA struggled with how to include African-American women in their organization as some of their white members began to question segregation. See: Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46*. See also: Whalan, *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro*.

American citizens and sending their sons to the military.<sup>397</sup> In this way, women could contribute to the nation while they remained in the domestic sphere.<sup>398</sup> During the First World War, republican motherhood played a large role in American women's contributions to the war effort, as well as the public's perception of their participation. The mother became a symbol of American patriotism, especially as depicted in the imagery discussed in chapter two, such as the American Red Cross propaganda posters that featured the "world's greatest mother."<sup>399</sup> Many women asserted that a mother's domestic role raising her children and running her home played an essential role in society, and that mothers had special qualities that made them well suited to reform work.<sup>400</sup> One scholar asserted that the AWM's acceptance of this idea:

allowed for the mobilization of women's labor without fundamentally challenging conventional gender roles. The War Mothers did not endorse controversial issues such as woman suffrage, protective labor legislation, or mothers' pensions. In fact, French repeatedly insisted throughout the war that they were not interested in politics, they were simply mothers looking out for their sons.<sup>401</sup>

During the postwar era, the AWM continued to embrace this conception of motherhood while they attempted to remain politically neutral.

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<sup>397</sup> Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 183-184. For more on republican motherhood see: Plant, *Mom*, 56-58; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*.

<sup>398</sup> For more on motherhood as a form of service to the nation see: Plant, *Mom*, 56-62. For an in-depth analysis of the Gold Star Pilgrimages in the context of motherhood and maternalism see: Rebecca Jo Plant, "The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages: Patriotic Maternalists and Their Critics in Interwar America" in *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare, and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Marian van der Klein, Rebecca Jo Plant, Nicole Sanders, and Lori R. Weintrob (New York: Bergham Books, 2012).

<sup>399</sup> Irwin, 86.

<sup>400</sup> du Plessis, 103, 101-106; Gordon, 55; Ladd-Taylor, 3-4

<sup>401</sup> du Plessis, 101-106, 104.

Unlike auxiliary organizations such as the American Legion Auxiliary and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, the AWM did not consider their organization to be an auxiliary organization based on their familial association with members of the military. They based their organization on their members' own wartime service. Like the members of the WOSL and the women honored by the Memorial to the Women of the World War, the AWM believed they had served and sacrificed during the war. In 1934, President Ochiltree reminisced about the war and opined that "the success of this struggle of our people was greatly forwarded by the help of the Mothers who, in united effort, stood firm for conservation of resources and for the necessary economies and sacrifices that won the World War."<sup>402</sup> Referring to the AWM's origins in Indiana's food conservation efforts, President Ochiltree reminded members that their contributions to the war constituted a form of wartime service.

People outside of the organization agreed with the AWM's definition of their activities as wartime service. At the 1921 convention in Sacramento, the opening speaker, General J.J. Borree, the Adjutant General of California, praised the AWM for their important wartime contributions.<sup>403</sup> He told the AWM that:

to you belong the credit of many victories won, you who so freely gave your loved ones to humanity's cause. It is true that the sorrows and sacrifices of mothers for a Nation are soon forgotten, and are little known by it. Men earn glory and distinction, but the thousand watchful nights and sacrifices by which a mother develops a hero are soon forgotten. No one counts for the mothers, themselves, did not count. The strength of an army is judged by its morale, by the morale of the individual soldier. This morale was carefully nourished and strengthened by the many years when the loving restraint and guidance of mothers instilled discipline and strength of character. The mother is, to the Army, what she is to the Nation, in her resting the divine duty of guiding and teaching her child so he may grow to manhood, a God-fearing, self-governed,

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<sup>402</sup> "Meeting of National Executive Board of American War Mothers, Auditorium Hotel in Chicago, Illinois September 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, & 9<sup>th</sup>, 1934," 13, WIMSA.

<sup>403</sup> "Transcript of Proceedings: Second Biennial Convention of American War Mothers, 1921," 6-7.

law abiding citizen. You, the mothers, have rendered a splendid service; with your sacrifices you brought victory to our armies and peace to a war-torn world. This was indeed a sacrifice...<sup>404</sup>

By invoking the importance of motherhood, General Borree defined a mother's role in raising her children and sending them to the military as a service to the nation, one that he viewed as partially responsible for the Allied victory.

The next speaker, Bishop William Hall Morland, agreed with Borree's praise for the wartime services of American mothers and urged them to turn their postwar energies towards pursuing peace.<sup>405</sup> His visit to the battle-scarred Western Front convinced him that war must never be allowed to happen again.<sup>406</sup> He believed the AWM could play an important role in the pursuit of world peace and recovery from the war. He entreated them to help peace come "out of destruction" and then to work for justice for "those boys who have come back, broken or maimed or gassed or weak or diseased or blinded or crippled or unemployed,--that they should receive immediate attention and relief."<sup>407</sup> Bishop Morland understood that mothers' service did not end with Armistice because they had the continuing responsibility of caring for the veterans who returned. As the traditional caregivers in society, mothers were in a unique position to pursue peace since they continued to deal with the physical and mental wounds of war through their children.

The veteranist-commemorations pursued by the AWM honored the martial contributions of war mothers alongside the military. At the 1921 convention, speaker Mr. S.J. Lubin reminded the AWM of the importance of commemorating their own

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid, 9.

wartime service.<sup>408</sup> He told the convention how “sometimes it is more difficult to live than to die” and that “the final burden of war is not carried by the soldiers, but, rather, by the parents, who, through struggle and loving sacrifice, raises the soldier for far different end and purpose.”<sup>409</sup> Although he admitted that fathers also suffered, he believed that because fathers had other interests to distract them, they suffered less than mothers.<sup>410</sup> He told the audience that “the mother, in the very beginning, makes the greatest sacrifice, which is typical of the larger service she renders throughout her son’s life, to the end. Therefore, it is fitting that we pay reverence, not alone, to the soldier, but to the war mother as well.”<sup>411</sup> Mothers deserved to be commemorated just as much as soldiers, for they bore the “final burden” of the war. As an organization, the AWM shouldered this burden collectively and believed it was their postwar duty as mothers to support America’s veterans.

### *Service Towards Veterans*

Helping veterans formed the foundation of the AWM’s mission of veteranist-commemoration. As ‘mothers of the nation,’ members considered themselves to be mothers not just of their own children, but to all veterans and members of the military. Each level of the organization prioritized service to veterans as one of their most important activities.

Although the AWM focused on service as their main form of memorialization, this did not mean that they rejected all forms of more traditional commemoration

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid, 19-20.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

such as monuments, memorials, and ceremonies. People and traditions do not change overnight, and female veteranist-commemorators often augmented their service work with other activities. For example, the AWM held annual Mother's Day ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, participated in Armistice Day ceremonies, issued a commemorative stamp in 1934, and some local chapters even built statuary memorials (figures 3.4 and 3.5).<sup>412</sup> However, the organization as a whole did not create a national, permanent statuary memorial to commemorate the war.

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<sup>412</sup> "Invitation to the American War Mothers Twelfth Annual Mother's Day Services, 1936" and "Program of the American War Mothers Thirteenth Annual Mother's Day Services, 1937," Folder: American War Mothers, Box 14, General Correspondence, Papers of John J. Pershing, Library of Congress; Pamphlet "The American War Mothers Present Seventh Annual Mother's Day Ceremonies," Folder: 1460-50-80-50 Memorial Trees 8/1925 to 3/1932, 1931; Box 67, RG 79 Records of the National Park Service, National Capital Region, Subject Files, 1924-1951, NACP; "Meeting of National Executive Board of American War Mothers Auditorium Hotel in Chicago, Illinois September 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, & 9<sup>th</sup>, 1934," pg. 18-29, American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection; "History of American War Mothers From Oct 1933 to September 1935. Assembled by National Historian Mrs. J.E. Wilcox of Bancroft, Kansas;" WIMSA. Examples of some memorials erected by individual AWM chapters include: the Inter-City American War Mothers Memorial outside of Kansas City, Missouri and a memorial to those from Marshall County, Indiana killed in the war, located the Buck cemetery. The Philadelphia Chapter of the AWM erected a memorial intended to be titled "The American War Mother and Her Sons" in Philadelphia, PA. James J. Heiman, *Voices in Bronze and Stone: Kansas City's World War I Monuments and Memorials* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star Books, 2013), 61; "War Mothers Ass'n Breaks Ground for Soldier Memorial," unlabeled news clipping, and "War Mothers Make Gift to Marshall County," 31, May 1923, Folder 8: AWM Indiana Chapter Scrapbook 1921-26, M458, Box 1, Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society; "Proposed Monument to Be Erected by the Philadelphia Chapter in honor of those who served and died in the World War," Box: 14, General Correspondence, The Papers of John J. Pershing, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; "Great War Monument, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-World War I Memorials and Monuments on Waymarking.com" *Waymarking.com*, Nov. 22, 2006 < [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WmZE2\\_Great\\_War\\_Monument\\_Philadelphia\\_Pennsylvania](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WmZE2_Great_War_Monument_Philadelphia_Pennsylvania) > (14 Mar 2015).



Figure 3.4: Image of a member of the AWM placing a wreath at Tomb of Unknown Soldier, 1937. The woman is probably National President Mrs. Boone. American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women's Memorial Foundation.



Figure 3.5: A photograph of AWM National President Mrs. Ochiltree raising the flag on the roof of the U.S. Capitol on Armistice Day in 1934. American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women's Memorial Foundation.



The AWM justified their decision to pursue veteranist-commemorations over a national monument by connecting their service mission to the memory of the American service members buried overseas. Alice French reminded the 1923 convention that their mission actually began during the war when members of the AWM supported the men in the armed forces “just as mothers would.”<sup>413</sup> After her 1921 trip abroad when she visited the overseas cemeteries and later saw the flag draped caskets that held the bodies of American dead who awaited repatriation, she came to believe that the AWM now had a duty to honor the dead by assisting those who survived and promoting peace.<sup>414</sup> She felt “that those boys who are resting under the sod of France are here. There isn’t any end and they, you know, can be counted on. They can count on we Mothers also every time.”<sup>415</sup> She made an emotional appeal to the convention to listen to these “boys” for:

Ever since the Armistice was signed we have been looking for an individual to pick up the torch. We have picked this one, we have picked that one. Each time a new leader has come on the scene we have thought: “That is the person now,” but you know I believe, Mothers, the boys were talking to us. Let us take up the torch individually and collectively...Now I believe the boys are here. I believe they are speaking. I believe they are counting on you, Mothers, to pick up the torch. We rocked these boys to sleep and I believe we should help them to rest in their last resting place. They say, “We shall not sleep if you do not take up the torch.”<sup>416</sup>

French believed that these dead bodies had power and voices that they used to speak to the living. They urged her and the AWM to memorialize their lives by dedicating

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<sup>413</sup> “Fourth Annual Convention National American War Mothers October 1-4, 1923 Kansas City, Missouri, Hotel Muhleback,” 26, no folder, no box, WIMSA.

<sup>414</sup> “History of American War Mothers,” pg. 22-24, Folder: 7: History of American War Mothers, M458, Box: 1 Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>415</sup> “Fourth Annual Convention National American War Mothers October 1-4, 1923 Kansas City, Missouri, Hotel Muhleback,” 26.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

their organization's postwar mission to veteranist-commemorations.<sup>417</sup> The AWM heeded the call of these soldier dead and devoted themselves to serving veterans through service projects conducted by the local and national levels of the organization.

State and local chapters pursued a variety of large and small projects to support veterans. The 1928 yearbook of the Kansas City Chapter proclaimed that six of the thirteen activities that the chapter supported in 1928 helped veterans; a total of ten of their activities involved some form of community service.<sup>418</sup> These activities included the sale of carnations to support hospital relief and entertainment programs, projects that brought Christmas cheer to hospitals, and activities that aided soldier's loan funds.<sup>419</sup> In 1936, Indiana's Clinton County Chapter adopted two hospitalized ex-service men and provided them with gifts, sent fruit baskets to ill veterans at Christmas, delivered groceries and blankets to the widow and children of a deceased service member, and mailed books and magazines to the Soldiers Home at Lafayette.<sup>420</sup>

At the national level, the organization's National Hospitalization Committee advocated for and supported veterans' hospitals, soldiers' homes, and other institutions.<sup>421</sup> The Prison Committee helped ex-service men and women in prison by providing them with care packages, writing them letters and holiday cards, and

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid 25-26.

<sup>418</sup> "Kansas City Chapter American War Mothers Yearbook 1928" 3, no folder, Box: 2004.100, American War Mothers Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> "Indiana" in the Scrapbook: "American War Mothers History, September 1935 to September 1937, Corabelle G. Francis, Historian, Kansas Section," WIMSA.

<sup>421</sup> "Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bi-ennial convention (7<sup>th</sup> national convention) of the American War Mothers", 168-175, WIMSA.

helping with their rehabilitation.<sup>422</sup> Many of these prisoners were in jail because they were the “victims of the drug habit.”<sup>423</sup> The National Legislative Committee, along with the state legislative committees, supported and lobbied for bills in Congress that affected the welfare of veterans and disabled veterans.<sup>424</sup> In 1923, the national AWM formally endorsed the Bonus which would provide retroactive payment to World War veterans in 1945, an issue that became contentious with the economic collapse of the Great Depression.<sup>425</sup> Their initial support of the Bonus demonstrated the AWM’s dedication to political advocacy on behalf of veterans.

One of the biggest and most well-known national service initiatives the AWM conducted to aid veterans was the annual sale of carnations each May just before Mother’s Day.<sup>426</sup> The AWM sold carnations because it was their national flower and symbolized their organization. It also mirrored the VFW’s “Buddy Poppy” program and the British Legion’s “Poppy Appeal.”<sup>427</sup> Veterans and families of World War One veterans made paper carnations and the proceeds from their sale funded welfare

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid, 129-133.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid, 135-140.

<sup>425</sup> “War Mothers in Favor of Bonus,” *Waco City Times Herald*, October 3, 1923, no folder, Box: 2004.100, American War Mothers Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>426</sup> Many pages of the AWM scrapbook recording the organization’s activities from 1935 to 1937 include new clippings of articles published in local newspapers about local chapter’s carnations sales. “Carnations Made by Vets,” n.d., no author or newspaper, taped in: Scrapbook: “American War Mothers History, September 1935 to September 1937, Corabelle G. Francis, Historian, Kansas Section,” WIMSA.

<sup>427</sup> “Constitution and By-Laws, American War Mothers, Amended September 23, 1929,” 14, in “American War Mothers First Annual Report Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Acceptance of Act of Incorporation 1925.”

WIMSA; The British Legion, “About the Poppy Appeal: History of the Poppy Appeal,” Poppy Appeal, n.d. <<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/poppy-appeal/about-the-poppy-appeal>> (31 Jul 2014); Veterans of Foreign Wars, “Buddy Poppy,” Buddy Poppy, n.d. <<http://www.vfw.org/Community/Buddy-Poppy/>> (31 Jul 2014).

work for needy veterans and their families.<sup>428</sup> An annual success, the carnation sale gained national recognition. In Washington D.C., the AWM sold carnations at the American Red Cross Headquarters, the site of the Memorial Building to the Women of the World.<sup>429</sup> The campaign even received official endorsements from President Calvin Coolidge and General Pershing in 1924; Pershing continued his support of the project for many years.<sup>430</sup>

The AWM achieved two goals by combining commemoration with community service in the carnation campaign. First, they honored and commemorated service members, their families, and war mothers. One newspaper described the carnation campaign as having the “double significance of tribute to the mothers of the country and the possible means with which to provide comfort and pleasure to the heroes of this country in the persons of disabled ex-service men.”<sup>431</sup> Second, the AWM supported needy veterans and their families through their traditional roles as caregivers. Another article detailed how the funds raised from the sale would help the

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<sup>428</sup> Letter to Heads of Services and Offices of American Red Cross National Headquarters from Executive Vice-Chairman, May 5 1943, Folder 610. American War Mothers, Box 935, RG 200 National Archives Gift Collection  
Records of the American National Red Cross, NACP.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid; Letter to All Service Heads from the Vice Chairman in Charge of Domestic Operations, May 9, 1934, Folder: 041. American War Mothers, Box 44, RG 200 National Archives Gift Collection, Records of the American National Red Cross, NACP. The AWM sold carnations at the Red Cross Headquarters in 1934, 1943, and probably throughout the 1930s.

<sup>430</sup> Letter from Coolidge to Mrs. H.H. McCluer, March 4, 1924, Folder: American War Mothers, Box 14, General Correspondence, Papers of John J. Pershing, Library of Congress; Letter from Pershing to Mrs. H. H. McCluer, April 14, 1924, Folder: American War Mothers, Box 14, General Correspondence, Papers of John J. Pershing, Library of Congress.

<sup>431</sup> “Carnations Made by Vets,” n.d., no author or newspaper, taped in: Scrapbook: “American War Mothers History, September 1935 to September 1937, Corabelle G. Francis, Historian, Kansas Section,” WIMSA.

families of needy veterans by providing coal, bedding, food, and shoes for their children, which would help these children remain in school.<sup>432</sup> It explained that the

carnations, many of which are made by disabled vets, are a symbol. They are even more than that. They are a means of preserving and fostering the courage, self-respect and faith of many men, who, in giving the best of themselves for the sake of their country, are unable now to give the best they wish they could to their families.<sup>433</sup>

As mothers, the AWM recognized that helping only veterans was not enough and that veterans' families also needed support. They understood that the wounds of war affected entire families and that they could honor veterans by helping them as well as their loved ones.

During the Great Depression, the AWM's support for veterans became even more important, and even though it often became more difficult, the AWM did their best to continue aiding veterans. At the AWM executive board meeting in September 1933, President Virgil Stone discussed a proposal to increase the cost of dues to finance the creation of a relief fund for the national headquarters in Washington D.C.<sup>434</sup> She admitted that many people objected to the increase, but she defended its necessity since it would help the men and women who came to the headquarters to seek help.<sup>435</sup> The VFW and the American Legion even sent destitute veterans to the headquarters, and President Stone wanted every chapter to contribute to the fund so they could provide relief to these veterans, some of who may have arrived as part of

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<sup>432</sup> "War Mothers Plan Sale of Carnations" n.d., no author or newspaper, taped in: Scrapbook: "American War Mothers History, September 1935 to September 1937 Corabelle G. Francis, Historian, Kansas Section," WIMSA.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> "Meetings of the Executive Board of the American War Mothers, Claypool Hotel Indianapolis, September 22-23, 1933," 4-8, no folder, no box, WIMSA.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

the 1932 or 1933 Bonus Marches.<sup>436</sup> After the war, the AWM had established such a strong reputation for helping veterans that many people assumed the AWM to be the best place to go for help.

To illustrate the seriousness of the situation. Mrs. Stone spoke about one of the veterans who came to the headquarters at the behest of the VFW and needed to be hospitalized.<sup>437</sup> When he arrived, he told them that: “I was weary, hungry, cold and discouraged, and I saw the sign on the door, ‘American War Mothers,’ and I said to myself, ‘I will find a friend in here.’”<sup>438</sup> Stone and her colleagues helped him as much as they could, and although they could not get him into a hospital, they gave him clothes. Mrs. Stone told the executive board that “Mrs. Huntington and Mrs. Faries and I are known as beggars. I want you to know that, that some of your National Officers are known in Washington as beggars.”<sup>439</sup> Unable to provide clothes for this veteran, Mrs. Stone and her colleagues presumably resorted to begging to acquire clothes for him. The AWM did not let the difficulties of the Great Depression derail their dedication to providing immediate, tangible relief to needy veterans.

#### *The American War Mothers Memorial Home*

The AWM physically demonstrated their commitment to veteranist-commemorations with their successful creation and support of a memorial home to lodge female

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid 5.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid, 6.

visitors of the patients at Fitzsimons Veterans Hospital.<sup>440</sup> Located nine miles from Denver, Colorado, Fitzsimons Veterans Hospital was a memorial building named in honor of Lieutenant W.T. Fitzsimons, the first American officer said to die in the war.<sup>441</sup> Even though it was one of the largest veterans' hospitals with almost 3,000 patients and extensive facilities, it's hard to reach location made it expensive and difficult for mothers and wives to visit patients and find suitable and affordable accommodations.<sup>442</sup> The AWM decided to establish a home near the hospital "where these visiting mothers and wives could have a pleasant home like place to stop while there and at a very modest price, and if they did not have the price, might make their visit any way."<sup>443</sup> The home served veterans and their female relatives who needed assistance with their trips; these women could stay at the home for a nominal fee or for free (figure 3.6 and 3.7).<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> "American War Mothers First Annual Report Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Acceptance of Act of Incorporation 1925," Memorial Home section, WIMSA.

<sup>441</sup> *Carry On*, VOL V. No. 3, August 1926, pg. 17, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection (WIMSA).

<sup>442</sup> Memorial Home section, "American War Mothers First Annual Report Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Acceptance of Act of Incorporation 1925," WIMSA.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> *Carry On*, VOL V. No. 3 August 1926, pg. 17, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection (WIMSA).



Figure 3.6: The American War Mothers Memorial Home in Aurora, CO. American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women's Memorial Foundation.

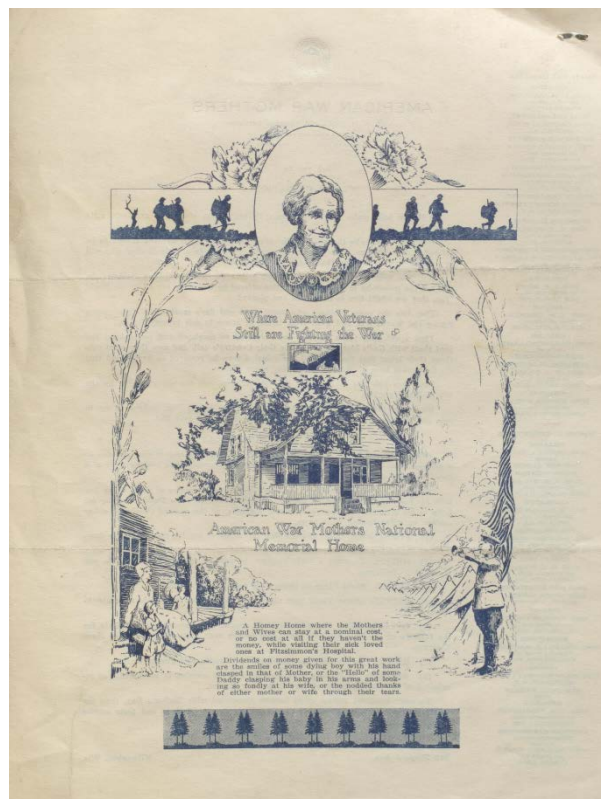


Figure 3.7: Reverse side of the flier "Wear a Carnation." Papers of John J. Pershing. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.



The AWM created and ran the home entirely on their own as a major national service project. In 1925, they created a corporation organized under Colorado law called “the War Mothers National Memorial Home Association,” of which shares of \$100 were sold only to members and chapters of the AWM.<sup>445</sup> This corporation purchased five acres of land adjacent to the hospital and construction work began even while fundraising continued.<sup>446</sup> In October 1925, the craftsman style home was completed, and the corporation granted the AWM a twenty year lease on the building without any rent payments.<sup>447</sup> The AWM then formed a committee to oversee the operation of the home, called the “Home Operating Committee;” the AWM continuously raised money over the years to fully support the home.<sup>448</sup> The Home Operating Committee selected a matron to run the facility and they supplied it with furnishings before it opened on November 1, 1925.<sup>449</sup> The AWM believed it was “the first home of its kind to be established in the United States, and we feel [it] is filling a great mission. It is also the first home to be established by mothers provided entirely by themselves.”<sup>450</sup> The AWM took pride in the Memorial Home’s success because it was independently executed by a group of women and demonstrated their ability to succeed without men.

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<sup>445</sup> For example, the Lincoln Capital (Nebraska) Chapter owned ten shares. Letter, Mrs. C.E. Burton to General Pershing, February 2, 1932, Folder: American War Mothers, Box 14, General Correspondence, Papers of John J. Pershing, Library of Congress. Memorial Home Section, “American War Mothers First Annual Report Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Acceptance of Act of Incorporation 1925.”

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid, “Home Operating Committee,” no page.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

The AWM dedicated the home as a living memorial in honor of their organization's Gold Star Mothers.<sup>451</sup> Rather than erect a national memorial to these women, the AWM built a home to help veterans and their families cope with the consequences of the war. The Memorial Home fulfilled its purpose when inhabited by living bodies, which enabled it to commemorate the Gold Star mothers and their deceased children through service to the war's survivors. Through this home, the AWM helped people heal, embracing the ideology of utilitarian memorials and veteranist-commemorations.

Other women's groups that encouraged veteranist-commemorations also supported the Memorial Home. The Women's Overseas Service League's magazine *Carry On* published a celebratory article about the home's July 11, 1926 dedication.<sup>452</sup> The article lauded the AWM for "the intangible gift to the nation's invalid service men" at the Fitzsimons Hospital, many of whom suffered from tuberculosis.<sup>453</sup> It emphasized that funds for the home had been raised through the AWM annual carnation sale, demonstrating that this site of community service was built through other acts of community service.<sup>454</sup> Mrs. H.H. McCluer, the AWM National President, told *Carry On* that "we felt that the greatest gift we could give our hospital veterans was to make it possible for them to have their loved ones come and visit them...many a man is cheered on in his struggle for health by having some relative visit him. And of course it means so much to the wives and mothers for even

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. V, No. 3 August 1926, pg. 17, WIMSA.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

a few days at the bedside of those who do not recover.”<sup>455</sup> The WOSL and the AWM agreed that creating a community-service based memorial to help people heal from the war represented the proper way to honor Gold Star women. In fact, the Denver chapter of the WOSL regularly volunteered at the hospital and saw firsthand the benefits provided by the Memorial Home.<sup>456</sup> The WOSL supported this utilitarian living memorial building because unlike the Memorial to the Women of the World War, it provided direct support to veterans and their families and did not waste money on architectural grandeur.

Through the Memorial Home, the AWM successfully executed the goals of veteranist-commemorations. The organization’s 1926 report noted how the home represented “a great asset in service.”<sup>457</sup> The Matron of the home reported that more than 150 mothers and wives of patients had been lodged at the Home, twenty-seven of whom received accommodations for free since they did not have adequate funds.<sup>458</sup> The Home hosted almost one hundred patients, husbands, and guests for entertainment, as well as parties for the hospital’s Disabled American Veterans post and the Red Cross.<sup>459</sup> The AWM kept strict financial reports about the home’s operation in an attempt to use their sparse funds wisely, but they kept in mind that the home’s mission was not one of profit.<sup>460</sup> As President Mrs. Thomas Spence stated at the 1929 Convention, in terms of finances, the memorial home would be run at “a

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> “Carry On” VOL. VI No. 2 May 1927, pg. 19, WIMSA.

<sup>457</sup> “Report: American War Mothers, 1926,” 7, WIMSA.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bi-ennial convention (7<sup>th</sup> national convention) of the American War Mothers,” 209, WIMSA.

loss probably, but we are not running the Home for profit, we are running it for service.”<sup>461</sup> The audience responded with loud applause, demonstrating their support for the home’s mission and its veteranist-commemoration agenda.<sup>462</sup>

The 1926 dedication of the Memorial Home represented only the beginning of the AWM’s long term service work at this facility. *Carry On* reported that several state AWM chapters planned to build additional buildings at the Memorial Home and the AWM continued their support of the Memorial Home and the hospital’s patients for many years.<sup>463</sup> They also expanded and improved the Memorial Home. On September 27, 1944, in the midst of World War Two, the AWM dedicated a new building at the Memorial Home.<sup>464</sup> Called the “Margaret N. McCluer Annex,” this living memorial building honored this senior past national president of the AWM who held office from 1923 to 1927 (figures 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10).<sup>465</sup> At the dedication ceremony, Major General Omar H. Quade, the Commanding General of Fitzsimons General Hospital, gave a speech and thanked the AWM for their constant support of the hospital since its establishment in 1918.<sup>466</sup> He pointed out how in addition to all of their other noble work, the AWM saw the hospital’s need for such a facility and took it on as a national project.<sup>467</sup> In doing so, he said they were “perpetuating for time immorial, the memories of their own loved ones who so gallantly gave their lives in World War I, that others who follow, and their loved ones, might partake of

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Framed “Remarks of Brigadier General Omar H. Quade...” no folder, no box, WIMSA.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid; Program “Dedication of Memory Trees.”

<sup>466</sup> Framed “Remarks of Brigadier General Omar H. Quade...”

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

periods of rest and relaxation, and have a comfortable place of temporary abode, close to their sick.”<sup>468</sup> General Quade acknowledged that the AWM had created a complex of living memorials that commemorated the First World War by serving disabled veterans.



Figure 3.8: “Mrs. Lenore H. Stone pictured with the architect and contractor before the American War Mothers Home, in Aurora, Colorado, after the completion of the Margaret N. McCluer Annex.” 27 Sept 1944. American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.



Figure 3.9: “On the day of the dedication, September 27, 1944, Mrs. Margaret N. McCluer (center front) was pictured with those taking part in the ceremonies, at the entrance of the Missouri Cottage.” American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.



Figure 3.10: “The above photograph was taken during the dedication ceremonies of the presentation to the American War Mothers of the Margaret N. McCluer Annex and the Missouri Cottage,” 1944. American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection. Courtesy of the Women’s Memorial Foundation.

By 1944, the veterans of the First World War and their families benefited from the Memorial Home complex alongside veterans of World War Two. Newly disabled veterans had already begun to arrive at the hospital, ushering in a new generation of patients and families at the Memorial Home. General Quade recognized this, and emphasized how the timing of this new annex would help these incoming veterans. He told the AWM that he was “glad to know that your organization has seen fit to expand the work of this project, to coincide with the expansion of our hospital under the trying conditions we are experiencing in this second world war.”<sup>469</sup> General Quade’s remarks testified to how the AWM expanded their efforts from supporting veterans of the First World War to assisting any and all veterans in need. At the Memorial Home complex, the First World War intersected with the Second World War. These living memorial buildings epitomized the goals of veteranist-commemorations, linked the two world wars, and kept alive the memory of the First World War and the sacrifices of its Gold Star mothers.

### *Supporting Fellow War Mothers*

In addition to supporting and advocating for veterans, the AWM devoted their time and resources to supporting members of their own organization. Like the WOSL, the AWM developed social welfare programs to help war mothers, especially those in need. In an era when social welfare was only just starting to be provided by the federal government, these women took it upon themselves to provide for each other.

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

Because they believed that they had served and sacrificed for the nation, they felt it was their patriotic duty to help fellow members and they understood this as a way of commemorating these mothers' wartime service.

National officers led the efforts to support members and set an example for others to follow. In 1929, the Fourth Vice-President, Mrs. Peter Campbell, assisted one Gold Star Mother in getting her dependency claims, helped another obtain her son's bonus, and helped a widow get her claims heard before the Veteran's Bureau.<sup>470</sup> Efforts such as these demonstrated the AWM's recognition that their fellow members were just as deserving of assistance as veterans.

During the Great Depression, the AWM increased their efforts to support fellow members and other war mothers. As part of the 1933 discussion about the proposed increase in dues, President Stone included stories of the destitute mothers who also sought help at the AWM's Washington D.C. headquarters when they had nowhere else to turn.<sup>471</sup> One night, the headquarters received a phone call that a woman with an AWM membership card had been picked up on the highway, "alone and destitute."<sup>472</sup> After this woman arrived at the headquarters, they learned that she had been a member of the AWM, but had been unable to pay her dues for two years.<sup>473</sup> The woman had travelled to Washington D.C. to find her estranged son, a "cripple" whose government pension had been cut, leaving him unable to help his mother.<sup>474</sup> The staff at the headquarters did their best to assist the woman; they took

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<sup>470</sup> Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bi-ennial convention (7<sup>th</sup> national convention) of the American War Mothers," 41.

<sup>471</sup> Meetings of the Executive Board of the American War Mothers Claypool Hotel..." 4-8.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid, 7-8.



her to the emergency room when she became ill and they even moved her back to Norfolk to seek better help.<sup>475</sup> Stone told the executive board that “I could stand here for hours and tell you of the cases that have come to us. Yet we have not one cent to do this relief work with except as we beg or go into our own pockets. Therefore, I say, there should be some provision whereby every chapter in the United States should contribute something of a relief fund to be used at National Headquarters.”<sup>476</sup> Without a relief fund raised through a small increase in dues, Stone and the other AWM leaders at the headquarters could not adequately help the destitute mothers who came to them for aid. Mrs. Stone even proposed the creation of a penny fund to help indigent war mothers.<sup>477</sup> As reported by *The Indianapolis News* on September 26, 1933, she wanted to establish an endowment fund to care for and support indigent war mothers by having each AWM member save one penny per day for several years.<sup>478</sup> Like the WOSL, the AWM asked their members to invest in their organization as a way to help their comrades and themselves.

The AWM also supported legislation that would benefit war mothers. In 1935, they announced their support for the “Forgotten Mothers Bill” which would have given dependent parents of wartime casualties an extra \$20 a month from the government, just as the government had already done for widows and orphans.<sup>479</sup> By supporting this bill, the AWM advocated for these parents. The AWM understood

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>477</sup> “Penny Fund Plan for War Mothers,” *The Indianapolis News*, September 26, 1933, in Scrapbook: History of American War Mothers From Oct 1933 to September 1935,” WIMSA.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> “Proceedings Tenth National Convention American War Mothers, September 30-October 3, 1935, Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, D.C.” 81, no folder no box, WIMSA.

that to properly memorialize the war, they had to help the mothers of the service members who died, for these women also suffered from the war.

One of the other ways that the AWM supported their fellow war mothers was through their steadfast support of the Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimage. As discussed in the next chapter, this was a trip paid for by the government that took women to visit the graves of their relatives in the American cemeteries in Europe. Many members of the AWM were Gold Star mothers eligible for the trip, so they formed a national Gold Star Committee that focused on issues that pertained to Gold Star women.<sup>480</sup> They lobbied for the passage of the Gold Star Pilgrimage bill and passed official resolutions that stated their support for this bill.<sup>481</sup> Member Ethel Stratton Nock, a Gold Star Mother very active in their cause, served as the AWM's Liaison Officer for the Gold Star Pilgrimage in 1929.<sup>482</sup> She reported that although "the mothers eligible for the pilgrimage to the cemeteries overseas form only a small part of the membership of the American War Mothers, the organization as a whole took an active part in furthering the legislation in Congress" to help not just AWM members but "all eligible widows and mothers."<sup>483</sup> Mrs. Nock helped the War Department notify all widows and mothers who were eligible for the trip, assisted

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<sup>480</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws, American War Mothers, Amended September 23, 1929," 3, 12.

<sup>481</sup> In 1925, the AWM passed a resolution petitioning Congress to support an iteration of the Pilgrimage bill that would have sent mothers and fathers of Americans buried overseas to those cemeteries. At the 1929 Convention in Louisville, they passed another resolution supporting the Pilgrimage, but this time, fathers were excluded from, while mothers and wives of those buried at sea or missing in action, as well as women who had already visited the cemetery at their own expense, were included. "Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bi-ennial convention (7<sup>th</sup> national convention) of the American War Mothers," 136, 195, 358; Resolution 10, "American War Mothers First Annual Report Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Acceptance of Act of Incorporation, 1925."

<sup>482</sup> "Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bi-ennial convention (7<sup>th</sup> national convention) of the American War Mothers," 188.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

their efforts in any way that she could, and served as a resource for AWM members eligible for the trip.<sup>484</sup>

As a Gold Star mother who had been able to visit her son's grave at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France at her own expense, Mrs. Nock believed in the importance of extending this opportunity to all Gold Star Mothers and Wives.<sup>485</sup> She appreciated "this opportunity for service" and she told the AWM's 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention how, since her own trip, "my greatest object in life was to bring the comfort I had received to all other mothers of our glorious sons whose bodies are guarded by the Stars and Stripes in the beautiful fields of honor overseas."<sup>486</sup> As an alternative to building a traditional monument in memory of her son, Mrs. Nock commemorated him by helping other women heal from their children's wartime deaths.

The AWM's strong support of the Gold Star Pilgrimage indicated that they believed that a government sponsored trip to the overseas cemeteries constituted a form of veteranist-commemoration done on behalf of Gold Star women. Their support for the pilgrimage characterized their overall commitment to serving their members, other war mothers, and veterans through their commitment to veteranist-commemorations in place of a national monument or a statue.

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid, 188-192.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid, 194.

## *Conclusion*

At the conclusion of “The War to End All Wars,” many people believed and hoped there would be no future wars. During their early years, the American War Mothers adhered to this idea and realized that their organization might be limited in existence to their lifetime, since there hopefully would not be any subsequent generations of war mothers. From the outset, the AWM incorporated their organization for twenty years; in 1921 Alice French explained her intention that when they met in 1937, twenty years after their formation, they could choose who to give their charter to, if they decided to continue the organization at all.<sup>487</sup>

As time progressed and the members of the AWM grew older, they worried even more about the longevity of their organization and their ability to pursue veteranist-commemoration. In 1940, Mrs. Eleanor Cresswell Wagner of the Admiral R.E. Coontz Chapter wrote to the American Red Cross to thank them for their continued support of the carnation sale. She explained that “we mothers are getting old and can no longer earn the money we once did to supply the comforts that our disabled “World War” Veterans need and seem to expect from the Mothers. While life lasts we hope not to disappoint these boys of ours and with the kind friends who year after year help us in our annual drive for funds we plan to carry on.”<sup>488</sup> Wagner’s concerns demonstrated that the AWM worried that their efforts supporting veterans would die with them. Without knowing that another war would soon create a new generation of war mothers, they realized that the legacy of their organization might

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<sup>487</sup> “Transcript of Proceedings: Second Biennial Convention of American War Mothers, 1921,” 30-32.

<sup>488</sup> Letter from Eleanor Cresswell Wagner to Mrs. C.D. Brawner, May 21, 1940, Folder 610. American War Mothers, Box 935, RG 200 National Archives Gift Collection, Records of the American National Red Cross, NACP.

fade away as they aged and became less active. Even as they grew older and needed more assistance themselves, they worried about their “boys” and tried to help them.

Throughout the interwar period, the American War Mothers continuously worked to support veterans and fellow war mothers through veteranist-commemorations and continued these efforts when the U.S. entered World War Two. Despite their wish that there would be no more war mothers, global events ushered in a new conflict and brought new women to the organization to continue their legacy of veteranist-commemorations. Although some local chapters certainly did engage in more traditional commemorative activities, as a national organization, the AWM did not erect a large permanent memorial to the First World War. Rather, they wanted their deeds of service to constitute their memorial; they honored those who served and sacrificed in the past by focusing on the present and the future. The memory of the war would live on in their charitable actions.

But memorials in the form of community service are intangible and ephemeral, something that the AWM seemed to realize. When the members of the AWM died and could no longer perform acts of commemorative service, their war memorials would die with them and much of the evidence of their commemorative contributions might be omitted from the collective memory of the United States.

Even the physical manifestations of their community service efforts proved fleeting. The American War Mothers National Memorial Home at Fitzsimons Hospital in Colorado flourished in the years after World War Two, but closed in 1960. The Fitzsimons Hospital itself closed in 1999 and became part of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, further erasing the memory of the First

World War and those who suffered in its aftermath from the landscape.<sup>489</sup> Although the American War Mothers Memorial Home remains today and was designated a Local Historic Landmark by the City of Aurora's Historic Preservation Commission in 1988, because of its 1960 closure and the hospital's demise, it no longer serves the community service purpose intended for it.<sup>490</sup> It appears to be just another quaint craftsman style home no different from the rest of its neighborhood; the power of the home's memorial status has been diminished. In Europe, craftsman buildings strikingly similar in their purpose to the Memorial Home, and also connected to honoring Gold Star Mothers, suffered a similar fate, but in this case were completely erased from the landscape.

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<sup>489</sup> Since the Fitzsimons Hospital Building is on the National Register of Historic of Historic Places, its architectural elements have been preserved despite its new usage. The suite of rooms where President Eisenhower recovered from his 1955 heart attack are preserved and open to the public. Special thanks to Laura Steadman and Melissa Mezger for alerting me to this information. "Eisenhower Suite: The President's 1955 Heart Attack," *University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus*, n.d. <<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/medicalschoo/administration/history/Pages/Eisenhower-Suite.aspx>> (12 Feb 2015). Gerry J. Gilmore, "Fitzsimons' Closure Attracts Investment, High-Tech Jobs," *DoD News*, 5 Jul 2005 <<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=16726>> (3 Feb 2015).

<sup>490</sup> City of Aurora Historic Preservation Commission, "Aurora Historic Landmarks," 2012 <<http://www.auroragov.org/cs/groups/public/documents/document/006864.pdf>> (31 Jul 2014): 22.

## **Chapter 4: “A Great Living and Moving Monument”: The Gold Star Pilgrimages as Veteranist-Commemorations**

A continent and ocean away from Aurora, Colorado, several other craftsman buildings also commemorated Gold Star women during the early 1930s. Built to accommodate the needs of the Gold Star mothers and widows who travelled to the American cemeteries in France as part of the official government pilgrimage, these temporary rest houses resembled the American War Mothers Memorial Home more closely than the formal cemeteries and monuments that surrounded them. By combining monuments and cemeteries with veteranist-commemorations, the Gold Star pilgrimages embodied the concept of a hybrid, living service memorial. Senator Robert Wagner of New York even defined it this way when he argued that “such a holy pilgrimage to the American shrines in Europe would be a great living and moving monument to peace.”<sup>491</sup>

Similar to other living memorials and veteranist-commemoration projects, the Gold Star pilgrimages served a functional purpose and helped those who sacrificed during the war and personally suffered from its consequences. Gold Star women believed that as mothers and wives who lost their children and husbands, they had served and sacrificed for the nation. Those Gold Star women who chose to bury their loved ones in the overseas American cemeteries further served the nation when they

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<sup>491</sup> “Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Military Affairs United States Senate, Seventieth Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 5494 S.2681 S. 5332, Bills to Enable the Mothers and Unmarried Widows of the Deceased Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines of the American Forces Interred in the Cemeteries of Europe to make a Pilgrimage to these Cemeteries,” Part 2, February 12, 1929, pg. 27, ProQuest Congressional Publications, <[congressional.proquest.com/congressional](http://congressional.proquest.com/congressional)> (29 September 2014).

relinquished their relative's grave to the American government. These women lobbied Congress and asked the government to send them on a pilgrimage to the overseas cemeteries to help deal with and alleviate their grief. As an official act of the government, the Gold Star pilgrimages demonstrated that the government agreed with their request to be recognized for their wartime sacrifices through a service rather than a statue. The government understood that they had an obligation to honor and help Gold Star women in this way.

When they requested the pilgrimage, Gold Star mothers and widows told the government that the best way to honor their sacrifices was through veteranist-commemorations. The government's acquiescence to their request demonstrated their acceptance of service as a form of commemoration and their agreement that it was uniquely appropriate for American women. The pilgrimages did not completely reject more traditional forms of memorialization. The memorial landscape being created by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) formed the backdrop of the pilgrimages and contained the graves and *lieux de memoire* believed to assuage the Gold Star women's grief. The pilgrimages combined these traditional monuments with the more personal and ephemeral veteranist-commemorations requested by the pilgrims. At the same time that the pilgrimages included women and veteranist-commemorations in the landscape of military memory, they also separated women from the main commemorative narrative and only granted them a temporary place at the overseas cemeteries.



*The American Battle Monuments Commission: Guardian of America's Overseas  
Military Memory*

The story of the Gold Star pilgrimages began during World War One as the U.S. began to grapple with the question of what to do with the remains of U.S. service members who died in Europe. In September 1918, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker publicly pledged that the government would repatriate the war dead to the U.S. for burial, as had been the case during the Spanish-American War.<sup>492</sup> This promise ignited controversy as no task of this size had ever been attempted overseas; 126,000 American service-members died in World War One and America's Allies did not immediately support the repatriation plan.<sup>493</sup> In response, the War Department sent a questionnaire to the next of kin that asked if they wanted the remains returned home or buried in an overseas American military cemetery.<sup>494</sup> Additionally, as the first fully mechanized, total war, World War One combat resulted in an increase in unidentifiable remains and missing service members. The absence of identifiable

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<sup>492</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933*, 21. During the Spanish-American War, the U.S. repatriated the remains of its casualties, although the number of casualties was much less than in WWI. Dean W. Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Guide to the Hallowed Grounds of the United States, Including Cemeteries Overseas* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1992), 3.

<sup>493</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 21; Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Identify, Bury, & Honor Our Military Fallen*, 135; George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 765; American Battle Monuments Commission, "World War I Listing," *The American Battle Monuments Commission*, n.d., <<http://www.abmc.gov/search/wwi.php>> (30 October 2012). The number of American dead from World War One varies by source; *America: A Narrative History 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* lists the total as 126,000 while the ABMC website lists the total number as 116,516.

<sup>494</sup> Sledge, 136. American Battle Monuments Commission, "World War I Listing." Including those Americans whose remains were never identified and are listed on the Walls of the Missing, a total of 33,717 Americans are buried or memorialized at ABMC World War One cemeteries in Europe.

bodily remains in some ways necessitated the establishment of sites of memorialization abroad.

When they received the questionnaire, many next of kin struggled to choose a final resting place for their loved ones as they grieved; at the same time, they also had to negotiate the government bureaucratization and collectivization of their mourning process. Families worried about the handling of the deceased and the process of military internment. As they had been during the Civil War, Americans were deeply concerned with the treatment and burial of the dead, something they described during the Civil War as the “work” of death.<sup>495</sup> While dealing with the immense death toll of the Civil War and with the military’s struggle, and often failure, to properly bury Civil War casualties, Americans created a system of burial and handling of the dead that accorded honor to the fallen.<sup>496</sup> After the establishment of a national cemetery system and a standardized process for military burial during the post-Civil War era, the treatment of the war dead continued to evolve during World War One as Americans living in the shadow of the Civil War contemplated the nation’s earlier struggles with military burial.<sup>497</sup> This issue even became politicized when former President Theodore Roosevelt, who lost his son Quentin in 1918, publicly declared that he intended to leave Quentin’s body in France because he believed that “where the tree falls, there let it lie.”<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2008), xiv, 61-63.

<sup>496</sup> Faust, 86-87, 96-101.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 87.

<sup>498</sup> Quoted in Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 70. Original Quotation from a letter from Roosevelt published in *The New York Times* on November, 18, 1918.

Despite Roosevelt's statement, many families remained torn about their burial choice.<sup>499</sup> Some, like, Mrs. Elizabeth Conley of Philadelphia, seemed unable to decide between repatriation and an overseas burial. Mrs. Conley lost her sons William and Francis in the war. The army buried Francis in a temporary grave in France but never found or identified William's remains. While deciding what to do with Francis's remains, Mrs. Conley changed her mind at least five times; she first told the Army she wanted Francis's body back, then she decided to leave it in France, and she later changed her mind several more times. In 1921, she wrote to the Quartermaster Corps that after "seeing so many others being brought back to the United States, I want mine back too."<sup>500</sup> When she learned that William's remains could not be identified and repatriated, she requested that Francis be buried in France because "if I can't get both back, I will let them stay there."<sup>501</sup> Mrs. Conley's final request came too late to be cancelled as the Army had already shipped Francis's remains to the U.S. In 1931, with her friend and fellow Gold Star mother Mrs. Katherine M. Gallagher, Mrs. Conley travelled to the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery as part of the Gold Star pilgrimage to visit the Tablets of the Missing that memorialized William.<sup>502</sup> Mrs.

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<sup>499</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 13.

<sup>500</sup> Letter from Mrs. Elizabeth Conley to the Quartermaster Corps, February 20, 1921, Folder 293: Conley, Francis X., Box No. 1008, Burial Cases Files 1915-1939, RG 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NACP. These burial files were located at the National Archives, College Park when the author conducted her research but have since been moved to the National Archives' National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. Information regarding Mr. Conley also came from: Folder: "American Gold star Mothers Applications for Membership Wa-We 1930-40," Box: 5, The Papers of the American Gold Star Mothers Manuscript Division, The Library of Congress.

<sup>501</sup> Letter from Mrs. Elizabeth Conley to the Quartermaster Corps, n.d., Folder 293: Conley, Francis X., Box No. 1008, Burial Cases Files 1915-1939, RG 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NACP.

<sup>502</sup> Letter from Mrs. Katherine M. Gallagher to Captain A.D. Hughes, June 21, 1931, Folder: Gallagher, Edward, Box No. 1784, Burial Cases Files 1915-1939, RG 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NACP.

Conley's tortured decision-making process demonstrates the difficult choices and anguish faced by Gold Star families.

Although many next of kin decided to have their loved ones repatriated, the families of 30,921 deceased service members chose an overseas burial. Along with the need to commemorate missing and unaccounted for service members, this justified the creation of permanent American military cemeteries in France, Belgium, and England.<sup>503</sup> In 1917, the Army established the American Graves Registration Service (GRS) under the Quartermaster Corps to identify and bury American casualties in temporary cemeteries in Europe.<sup>504</sup> After the war, these scattered graves needed to be consolidated into the permanent American cemeteries promised by the government. Congress enacted legislation on March 4, 1923, to establish the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) to fulfill this mission.<sup>505</sup> An independent federal agency of the executive branch, Congress entrusted the ABMC to act as the "guardian of America's overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials."<sup>506</sup> First led by General John J. Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in World War One, the ABMC established eight cemeteries for the World War One dead and fourteen monuments to honor the

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<sup>503</sup> Sledge, 136.

<sup>504</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 22.

<sup>505</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, "American Memorials and Overseas Military Cemeteries" (American Battle Monuments Commission, 2009), informational pamphlet, 3.

<sup>506</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, "The Commission: Intro," *The American Battle Monuments Commission*, n.d., <<http://abmc.gov/commission/index.php>> (20 December 2011).

achievements of the AEF.<sup>507</sup> The cemeteries also contained Tablets of the Missing that honored the missing and unaccounted for service members.<sup>508</sup>

The establishment of these cemeteries required the permission of the countries where they were located. The French government initially banned the exhumation and transport of bodies from 1919 to 1921, fearful of the hygienic risks and the gruesomeness of transporting so many bodies in their already war-torn country. For many of these reasons, Great Britain prohibited the repatriation of their dead and created their own foreign cemeteries.<sup>509</sup> Eventually, most of the issues about the creation of overseas U.S. cemeteries and repatriation were resolved. The French ultimately supported the creation of American cemeteries since they desired good relations with the U.S. and reduced the need to move so many bodies throughout France, a morbid task that the French government feared would upset the French people.<sup>510</sup>

The decision to create these overseas military cemeteries emerged from the military cemeteries created during and after the Civil War that utilized standardized

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<sup>507</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, "American Memorials and Overseas Military Cemeteries," 3, 6-14. The ABMC also originally contained a Historical Section, staffed in part by Major Dwight D. Eisenhower, which published a guidebook to the U.S. World War One battlefields and individual publications summarizing the operations of each AEF Division. See: Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941*, Prologue.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid, 6-14. 30,921 casualties of World War One lie in perpetuity in these cemeteries. See also: American Battle Monuments Commission, "The Commission: Intro." Today, the ABMC administers twenty-five permanent overseas military cemeteries and twenty-six memorials and continues to carry out its mission of memorializing America's overseas war dead. American Battle Monuments Commission, "The Commission: History," *The American Battle Monuments Commission*, n.d., < <http://abmc.gov/commission/history.php> > (20 December 2011); American Battle Monuments Commission, "Memorials: Intro," *The American Battle Monuments Commission*, n.d.

<sup>509</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 38-45.

<sup>510</sup> For a detailed examination of the American negotiations regarding the war dead and the negotiations with foreign countries regarding repatriation and the creation of American cemeteries see: Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 38-50, 66-69, 116-120.

rows of identical headstones and created a collective landscape of the war dead.<sup>511</sup>

These vast cemeteries gave the Civil War dead a visual reality and power that shaped American society and culture for the next century; this same sacrificial landscape is seen in the meticulous rows of identical headstones in the shape of crosses and Stars of David at the ABMC cemeteries.<sup>512</sup> The Civil War also created an expectation that a systematic accounting of the dead and their honorable burial was the obligation of the government, leading to the creation of the GRS and ABMC.<sup>513</sup>

Civil War cemeteries, the private cemeteries established in nineteenth-century America, and the Allies' First World War cemeteries all influenced the design of the ABMC cemeteries.<sup>514</sup> In particular, the designs of many elements at the ABMC cemeteries stemmed from the neoclassical, gothic, and Egyptian revival styles popular in American cemetery design at the turn of the century.<sup>515</sup> The

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<sup>511</sup> Faust, 248-249. For another discussion of the development of Civil War cemeteries see for example: Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914*. Prior to the Civil War, Congress had established the Mexico City National Cemetery for the remains of Americans killed during the Mexican War, many of whom were buried in a common grave. The ABMC became the steward of this cemetery in 1946. In 1982, the ABMC also acquired the Corozal American Cemetery in Panama, which contains the graves of American veterans and those who contributed to the construction of the Panama Canal. American Battle Monuments Commission, "Mexico City National Cemetery," informational pamphlet, n.d. <[http://www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/publications/MexicoCity%20508\\_9-9-2014.pdf](http://www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/publications/MexicoCity%20508_9-9-2014.pdf)> (5 Feb 2015); American Battle Monuments Commission, "Corozal American Cemetery and Memorial," informational pamphlet, n.d. <[http://www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Corozal%20508\\_9-9-2014.pdf](http://www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Corozal%20508_9-9-2014.pdf)> (5 Feb 2015).

<sup>512</sup> Faust, 249. The careful organization of graves and architectural elements at the ABMC cemeteries that emerged from the Civil War cemeteries must also be understood as a result of the "search for order" in the U.S. after the Civil War. In discussing the rise of civic art and architecture after the Civil War, Michele Bogart reminds us that sculptors and artists were also influenced by this interest in the organization of society, an interest which inspired ideas about civic art that influenced memorials and cemeteries both at in the U.S. and abroad, including the ABMC projects. See: Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930*, 6.

<sup>513</sup> Faust, 271.

<sup>514</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 39-50.

<sup>515</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the evolution and importance of these revival styles in American cemeteries see: Peggy McDowell and Richard E. Meyer, *The Revival Styles in American Memorial Art* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994). For more on the development and design of American cemeteries see: Kenneth T. Jackson and Camilo José Vergara,

commemorative architecture of the ABMC's cemeteries emerged during a detailed planning process that involved the members of the ABMC's Commission (their governing board) and the eleven American architects they hired to design the cemeteries and memorials.<sup>516</sup> The resulting cemeteries and memorials displayed the aesthetic sensibilities of high style modern classicism, the French Romanesque Revival, and the French eclectic style, popular architectural styles at the time that embraced modernist aesthetics yet still referenced historical precedents.<sup>517</sup> While each cemetery has a different design, they are all highly controlled formal spaces that are symmetrical, precisely landscaped, and include formal entrances, long walkways with intersecting axes, stone memorials, and chapels (figures 4.1 and 4.2).<sup>518</sup> The obsessive orderliness of the cemeteries helped to mitigate the violent chaos of the surrounding battlefields and provided mourners with a controlled space to grieve.

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*Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press and David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

<sup>516</sup> These architects include including Paul Cret, supervising architect John Russell Pope, and Egerton Swartwout. Elizabeth G. Grossman, "Architecture for a Public Client: The Monuments and Chapels of the American Battle Monuments Commission," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. XLIII, Number 2 (May 1984): 119-143; 119. Grossman provides an in-depth analysis of the architecture, design, and creation of the ABMC cemeteries and memorials.

<sup>517</sup> Grossman, 127; Also, undated video "Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial" from: American Battle Monuments Commission, "Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial," *The American Battle Monuments Commission*, n.d., <<http://abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/am.php>> (20 December 2011).

<sup>518</sup> The landscapes of the ABMC cemeteries also resemble parks, tying them to the pastoral burial grounds popular in the nineteenth century U.S. as well as to the new memorial parks that emerged in the decades after 1917.

Kenneth T. Jackson and Camilo José Vergara, *Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery*, 5, 28-29. The cemeteries also included office buildings and visitors' buildings, which were built either in the French eclectic style or in the French Romanesque Revival style. Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 387. The French eclectic style was popular in America from about 1915 to 1945.



Figure 4.1: An early aerial view of the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial, undated. Note the strictly symmetrical layout of the cemetery. National Archives, College Park.



Figure 4.2: View of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial looking toward the chapel. Note the park-like landscape, the square, the symmetrical grave plots separated by rows of trees, and the expertly manicured landscape. July 2012. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.



The ABMC cemeteries and memorials served commemorative and diplomatic goals by representing the U.S. overseas; they subsumed the individuality of those buried at the cemeteries to the larger purposes of these national shrines.<sup>519</sup> The process of designing the cemeteries involved intensive discussions and exchanges between the architects and the ABMC commissioners.<sup>520</sup> Like other civic design projects, the results reflected the tastes and values of the designers, but also fulfilled the requirements of these government clients.<sup>521</sup> The government needed the cemeteries and memorials to properly memorialize the American dead, honor the contributions of the AEF, and project American diplomatic power in Europe.<sup>522</sup>

The memorial landscapes of the ABMC played a central role in the Gold Star pilgrimages. The main premise of the pilgrimages asserted that visiting these graves could help ease the pain of the Gold Star pilgrims. Gold Star mother Ethel Stratton Nock, an ardent advocate for the pilgrimage and an active member of the American War Mothers, often recounted the life-changing effect of her independent visit to her son's grave at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.<sup>523</sup> During a 1929 Congressional hearing about the pilgrimage legislation, Nock described how after her

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<sup>519</sup> Robin, *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900-1965*, 30, 60. Robin provides a detailed examination of the political and diplomatic meaning of the ABMC cemeteries and memorials.

<sup>520</sup> Grossman, 120, 143.

<sup>521</sup> Grossman, 120, 143. Bogart's examination of civic art in New York City argues that the closely connected civic art and City Beautiful movements experienced a larger breakdown after WWI that caused civic art to start falling out of preference. Conceived and constructed during this breakdown, perhaps the ABMC cemeteries and memorials were affected by these developments which may explain the difficulties in the planning process. Bogart, 294.

<sup>522</sup> Grossman, 143.

<sup>523</sup> "Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Military Affairs United States Senate, Seventieth Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 5494 S.2681 S. 5332, Bills to Enable the Mothers and Unmarried Widows of the Deceased Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines of the American Forces Interred in the Cemeteries of Europe to make a Pilgrimage to these Cemeteries," Part 2, February 12, 1929, pg. 6-7, ProQuest Congressional Publications, <[congressional.proquest.com/congressional](http://congressional.proquest.com/congressional)> (29 September 2014).

son's death, she was "a broken, grief-stricken woman, avoiding all contacts outside my home and wrapped in a great sorrow that seems to me now as completely selfish."<sup>524</sup> Only visiting her son's grave ended her depression. She explained how "in the year and a half that has elapsed since I saw the white crosses overseas, I have devoted my life to service to veterans and gold-star mothers."<sup>525</sup> The visit enabled her to find solace in service work that commemorated her son, especially with the American War Mothers. Nock demonstrated the healing power a cemetery visit could provide to other Gold Star women.

### *The Gold Star Pilgrimage Program*

The Gold Star pilgrimages formed an important part of the national collective mourning process after World War One.<sup>526</sup> The Gold Star became an emblem for American casualties during World War One as a substitute for traditional black mourning clothes.<sup>527</sup> By wearing a gold star on their clothing, much like a wartime

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> The Gold Star Pilgrimages have recently been the subject of several historical studies. These include: Budreau, *Bodies of War*; Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance: The Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimage and America's Fading Memory of the Great War," 371-411; Graham, *The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages of the 1930s*; Constance Potter, "World War I Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages, Part I"; Constance Potter, "World War I Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages, Part II"; Fenelon, *That Knock on the Door: The History of Gold Star Mothers in America*; Rebecca Jo Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*; Rebecca Jo Plant, "The Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages: Patriotic Maternalists and Their Critics in Interwar America" in *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare, and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*; and Meyer, "Mourning in a Distant Land: Gold Star Pilgrimages to American Military Cemeteries in Europe, 1930-33." However, only Budreau's work includes an in-depth historical analysis of the Gold Star Pilgrimages in terms of memory and commemoration. Plant's work analyzes the pilgrimages in terms of maternalism and motherhood and situates the program within women's history. The works by Graham, Fenelon, and Meyer are more focused on summary than on analysis and Potter's article presents a history of the pilgrimages aimed at helping researchers use the associated records at the National Archives.

<sup>527</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 95.

medal, Gold Star families used their bodies as memorials and adopted a corporeal, living embodiment of the memory of the dead.

To create communities for collective mourning and support, the Gold Star mothers and widows established various organizations such as the Gold Star Association and the Gold Star Mothers, Inc.; they were also active in the American War Mothers.<sup>528</sup> These groups lobbied Congress in the 1920s for an official government-sponsored pilgrimage to their loved ones' graves. They convinced the government of its necessity through an appeal to their sacrifices as mothers and widows, the goodwill it would foster with the former Allies, and the endorsement of the politically powerful American Legion.<sup>529</sup> The idea for the government-sponsored pilgrimage program began because of the difficulties in visiting the overseas cemeteries.<sup>530</sup> Visits to the isolated cemeteries were expensive and hard for many Gold Star women to make on their own.<sup>531</sup>

These various groups lobbied so passionately for the government-sponsored pilgrimage because they believed that mothers and widows could gain some closure by visiting the cemeteries. As Ethel Stratton Nock told General Pershing after her visit: "I feel uplifted mentally and physically because of this pilgrimage and will be able, I am sure, to bring peace to many troubled hearts of Gold Star Mothers."<sup>532</sup> The

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<sup>528</sup> Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance", 386.

<sup>529</sup> For a detailed description and analysis of the lobbying efforts that led to the passage of the pilgrimage legislation, see: Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 192-208.

<sup>530</sup> Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance," 380.

<sup>531</sup> Budreau, "The Politics of Remembrance", 380.

<sup>532</sup> Graham, 76-77; "Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bi-ennial convention (7<sup>th</sup> national convention) of the American War Mothers," 188-195, American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection; Letter, Mrs. Ethel Stratton Nock to General Pershing, September 27, 1927, Folder: American War Mothers, Box 14: General Correspondence, 1904-48, The Papers of John J. Pershing, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

testimony of women like Nock, who had visited the cemeteries strengthened their argument. Victory came on March 2, 1929, when after much debate in Congress and an endorsement from President Coolidge, Public Law 70-952 authorized “an act to enable the mothers and widows of the deceased soldiers, sailors, and marines, of the American forces now interred in the cemeteries of Europe to make a pilgrimage to these cemeteries.”<sup>533</sup> The mothers and widows who accepted the invitation to go on the trip represented a cross-section of American society at the time. They came from all across the U.S., from urban and rural backgrounds, varying economic and social classes, and different religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds.

The exclusion of men from the final pilgrimage legislation resulted from more than just a lack of strong male advocacy; it had to do with the historical connections between women and the mourning process, especially in the context of wartime deaths and motherhood.<sup>534</sup> While the Gold Star could be worn by any parent, spouse, or family member of a wartime casualty, and while earlier versions of the pilgrimage bill included fathers and husbands, men did not receive the same special status and inclusion as mothers and widows.<sup>535</sup>

Deep seated popular sentiment privileged women’s roles in mourning military casualties. As discussed in chapter three, American women had been encouraged to

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<sup>533</sup> Budreau, “The Politics of Remembrance,” 373; Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 202-205; 45 Stat 1508, 1927-1929, Hein Online, <<http://heinonline.org>> (29 September 2014). For a detailed explanation of the entire Pilgrimage program and legislation see: Graham, *The Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages of the 1930s*, 7, 50-74, and Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*, 55-68.

<sup>534</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the pilgrimages in the context of motherhood and maternalism see Plant, Chapter 2, “Mothers of the Nation: Patriotic Maternalism and Its Critics” in *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*.

<sup>535</sup> Graham, 71; Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*, 64-66.

support the nation through the ideals of republican motherhood.<sup>536</sup> Both ideologies supported the belief that motherhood was a form of service to the nation, especially during the war when propaganda portrayed women as heroic mother figures, such as the American Red Cross's "world's greatest mother" poster discussed in chapter two.<sup>537</sup>

The memory of the Civil War also influenced women's roles in commemoration. Women's public participation in Civil War mourning; the establishment and maintenance of military cemeteries, memorials, and battlefields; and pilgrimages to those sites carved out a unique role for women in memorialization.<sup>538</sup> Especially in the South, women led the movements to establish formal military cemeteries and created mourning traditions that honored fallen soldiers.<sup>539</sup> As the daughters and granddaughters of the generation who memorialized the Civil War, the women of the First World War grew up observing their elder's roles in commemoration.

The Civil War's legacy and republican motherhood helped justify the Gold Star pilgrimage, and at times, elevated the mothers above the widows.<sup>540</sup> Although

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<sup>536</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 183-184. For more on republican motherhood see: Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*, 56-58 and Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*; du Plessis, "Alice French, Indiana War Mothers: From World War I "Kitchen Soldiers" to Postwar Immigrant Reformers," 99-118; 103, 101-106; and Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 194-197.

<sup>537</sup> Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 86.

<sup>538</sup> For more on women's roles in commemorating the Civil War see for example: Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*; Mills and Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*; Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations & the Lost Cause*.

<sup>539</sup> Janney, 1-3; Blair, 5-6.

<sup>540</sup> Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*, 56-68; Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 88-94.

widows were included in the final pilgrimage legislation and many widows went on the trip, widows did not lobby as persistently for the legislation as did mothers, and only widows who did not remarry were eligible.<sup>541</sup> Influenced by the heightened importance given to motherhood, some mothers felt they were more deserving of inclusion than the widows, and mothers outnumbered widows on the pilgrimages.<sup>542</sup> This may have been in part because mothers had more time than widows to lobby for the pilgrimage and participate in the trip. By the 1930s, these mothers' other children were probably grown, while the un-remarried widows might still have had children at home and may have been working to support their families. These realities may have prevented some widows from being as active as the mothers who might still have had a husband's support.

The pilgrimages to battlefields, cemeteries, and memorials that became popular after the Civil War inspired the concept of the Gold Star pilgrimages.<sup>543</sup> After World War One, pilgrimages to battle sites increased in popularity among most of the combatant nations. People traveled to the battlefields independently and as part of organized trips such as the American Legion's 1927 "Second AEF" trip to their convention in Paris.<sup>544</sup>

The religious connotations of the word "pilgrimage" are significant in the context of this new wave of battlefield tourism and the Gold Star program. The terms "pilgrimage" and "pilgrim" carried religious significance, connected the trips to

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<sup>541</sup> Graham, 59-60.

<sup>542</sup> Graham, 59-60; Plant, 63-64; and Meyer, 40.

<sup>543</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 154; Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 87.

<sup>544</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 176-184, 188-189, 190-191. David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 1-2.

spiritual rituals of grief, and imbued them with a sense of the sacred that distinguished them from normal tourism.<sup>545</sup> The ABMC cemeteries contained overtly religious symbolism and spaces; each cemetery included a chapel and, unlike Arlington National Cemetery's rectangular headstones, all of the ABMC's headstones were shaped as either crosses or Stars of David. Despite being government programs, neither the cemeteries nor the pilgrimage were completely secular. At the heart of the meaning of a pilgrimage is the sense that the pilgrim can capture a part of the past and experience an event even if they did not participate themselves.<sup>546</sup> Pilgrims try to distinguish themselves from regular tourists through the connections that bring them on a pilgrimage; they want their pilgrimage to be viewed as a public ritual linked to ideas of national or religious identity.<sup>547</sup> These descriptions aptly portrayed the Gold Star pilgrimages since the pilgrims were distinguished from normal tourists as part of an elaborate, public, and somewhat spiritual ritual of national remembrance staged by the U.S. government.

The Army's Quartermaster Corps meticulously planned and organized the Gold Star pilgrimages. Every detail of each pilgrim's journey was accounted for, such

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<sup>545</sup> Lloyd, 5-7. Robin also asserts that visiting World War One cemeteries were pilgrimages not so different from those to the holy shrines after the Crusades. Robin, 55. For more about the intersection of religion and the commemoration of World War One in Europe see: Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World War*; Annette Becker, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930*, trans. Helen McPhail (New York: Berg Publishers, 1998); and Meyer, "Mourning in a Distant Land: Gold Star Pilgrimages to American Military Cemeteries in Europe, 1930-33," 48. Mosse discusses what he calls "Myth of the War Experience" which depicted the war as a sacred event, as well as the "cult of the fallen soldier while Becker explains how parts of the front in France had been deemed sacred land. Mosse, 7; Becker, 124. See also: Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journeys: American Tourists in France From Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 225-228.

<sup>546</sup> Lloyd, 217.

<sup>547</sup> Lloyd, 220-221.

as their transportation from their homes to the point of embarkation at New York City, their identification badges, and their medical histories.<sup>548</sup> Pilgrims who accepted the invitation were split into groups that travelled in a “party” during the summers of 1930 to 1933.<sup>549</sup> In total, 6,654 women who represented the social, economic, ethnic, religious, geographic, and racial diversity of the AEF participated in the Gold Star pilgrimages.<sup>550</sup> The Army arranged and paid for the entirety of every woman’s trip.<sup>551</sup> Each party’s overseas itinerary varied based on the location of the main cemetery they were to visit, but most trips to France included visits to the major sights in Paris such as the Arc de Triomphe, Napoleon’s tomb, the Eiffel Tower, and Notre Dame.<sup>552</sup>

Throughout the trip, the pilgrims’ military officer escorts, nurses, and even European officials treated them with special respect and honor. Each group that went to Paris laid a wreath on the French Tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe during a special ceremony.<sup>553</sup> The pilgrims then travelled to the French countryside to visit the cemeteries and fulfill the purpose of their journey. The cemetery visits were given careful consideration since the Quartermaster Corps

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<sup>548</sup> The pilgrimage records at the National Archives include countless items testifying to the seriousness with which the Quartermaster Corps approached the planning of the pilgrimage. The records of the Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimage can be found in the National Archives II, College Park, MD (NARA) in RG 92: Office of the Quartermaster General under various iterations of titles such as “Pilgrimage, Gold Star,” “Gold Star Pilgrimage,” and “American Pilgrimage Gold Star Mothers and Widows.” These records will forthwith be abbreviated as “NARA RG 92” and described by box number and folder title. The items described in the paragraph above were found in NARA RG 92 Box No. 391, “Folder 561561 “PILGRIMAGE GOLD STAR MOTHERS” (page 448-551) Vol. 5 gm (REPORT).”

<sup>549</sup> The Army assigned an identifying letter to each party (for example Party “O”). The size of the parties varied; for example, the very first pilgrimage group, Party “A,” included 234 women in its 1930 trip while Party “E” in 1932 included just 79 women. Graham, 159, 148.

<sup>550</sup> Graham, 202.

<sup>551</sup> Graham, 19.

<sup>552</sup> Itinerary of “Somme Cemetery Party B Group 5, and Group 2. NARA RG 92 Box 391, “Folder “561561 PILGRIMAGE GOLD STAR MOTHERS (page 448-551) Vol. 5 gm (REPORT).” Visits to Brookwood Cemetery in England also included stops at tourist sites.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid; Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 222.



realized they could be emotionally upsetting for the Gold Star mothers and widows as they finally knelt by the grave of their husband or child. Perhaps in keeping with gender stereotypes of the day that portrayed women as weaker and more emotionally fragile, they forbade formal ceremonies at the cemeteries or other activities that might agitate the pilgrims' emotions. Trip planners wanted to "keep the emotional reaction at a minimum" to protect the pilgrims' physical and mental health.<sup>554</sup> This preoccupation with maintaining the public composure, dignity, and well-being of the pilgrims during the cemetery visits triggered the construction of rest houses to provide the pilgrims with some privacy at the cemeteries even as they publicly mourned throughout the trip.

At the same time that the Gold Star pilgrimages demonstrated the government's commitment to the families of World War One casualties, the program attracted a lot of publicity that promoted the work of the ABMC and the military during a time of increasing isolationism and pacifism. Colonel Richard T. Ellis, the main officer in charge of the pilgrimage, created a scrapbook where he saved newspaper articles and other publicity materials about the pilgrimage. Over one hundred pages long, this scrapbook documented the high level of public interest in the program and contained dozens of newspaper articles both praising and criticizing the program.<sup>555</sup> The pilgrimage also gained national exposure in popular culture through John Ford's film *Pilgrimage* (1933) that told the fictional story of a Gold Star mother

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<sup>554</sup> Report about the pilgrimages, March 7, 1931, Folder "319.1 Pilgrimage Gold Star (Europe 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933PILG)," Box 360, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>555</sup> "Scrapbook of Col. Richard T. Ellis." Found in: Box 1: Scrapbook of Col. Richard T. Ellis (Gold Star Pilgrimages) 1930. Transportation Request. 1930 (Gold Star Pilgrimage). Letters sent Relating to Provision of Subsistence Stores during Mexican War. Flood Sufferers in Miss. Valley (1914-15), RG 92, NACP.

from Arkansas who struggled with regrets about her relationship with her son during the trip.<sup>556</sup> With so much public interest in the program from the media and even Hollywood, the Army carefully crafted the official image of the pilgrimage and tried to improve Army's public reputation.<sup>557</sup>

The decision to racially segregate the pilgrimages produced backlash against the program from the African-American community and their supporters and tainted it with the scars of Jim Crow America.<sup>558</sup> The 168 African-American mothers and widows who accepted their pilgrimage invitations traveled in separate, segregated parties during the summers of 1930 and 1931.<sup>559</sup> The segregation of the pilgrimages demonstrated the restricted inclusion of African-American women into American commemorative culture. Although African-American women were allowed to participate in the pilgrimages, like the WOSL, American Red Cross, American War Mothers, and the AEF, the government adhered to Jim Crow era policies.

American women's success in convincing the U.S. Government to sponsor and pay for the entire pilgrimage demonstrated the growing power of women at the national level and their increasingly important place in the commemorative culture surrounding World War One. Even after winning the franchise, these women remained on the political stage and framed their civic identities in terms of uniquely

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<sup>556</sup> *Pilgrimage*, dir. John Ford, 99 mins., Fox Film, 1933, DVD. The film was loosely based off of a short story with the same title by I.A.R. Wylie published in *The American Magazine* in November 1932. I.A.R. Wylie, "Pilgrimage," *The American Magazine* Vol. CXIV, No. 5 (November 1932); 44-47, 90-96.

<sup>557</sup> Lisa Budreau argues that the pilgrimages and American remembrance of WWI in general was politically motivated. Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 241.

<sup>558</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, Ch. 22 "Stars of Black and Gold." In this chapter, Budreau conducts an in-depth examination and analysis of the segregated Pilgrimages. For more on the segregation of the pilgrimage program and other public criticisms of the pilgrimages see: Plant, 68-77.

<sup>559</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 215.

female issues such as motherhood and marriage.<sup>560</sup> Just as they had after the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, women made significant contributions to the memorialization of World War One. But as the temporary rest houses constructed at the cemeteries showed, this inclusion remained gender-restricted and ephemeral; it left no permanent, tangible evidence of women's importance to overseas commemoration on the landscape.

### *Gold Star Pilgrims Served and Sacrificed for the Nation*

Gold Star mothers and widows defined the loss of their child or husband as a wartime service and sacrifice that included them in the group of women honored by the American Red Cross's Memorial Building to the Women of the World War. Because of their loss, they received a place of distinction in the interwar commemorative culture.

Those Gold Star women who choose an overseas burial performed a further act of service and sacrifice by presenting their service member's bodily remains and grave to their country. Whether they made this choice because of their patriotism, their personal beliefs, or other circumstances does not negate the fact that an overseas burial allowed the U.S. government to use their loved one's body for diplomatic and political purposes, even if this was not their intention. The families of the missing and unaccounted for had no choice about what to do with their loved ones' bodies; these

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<sup>560</sup> Plant provides a detailed assessment of women's political activism during the interwar period in the context of the pilgrimages. Plant, 57.

women were invited on the pilgrimage to view their relative's name on the Tablets of the Missing and stand by an unknown soldier's grave.

Newspaper coverage of the pilgrimages reiterated that the Gold Star pilgrims served and sacrificed for the nation. A May 1931 article in *The National Tribune* wrote that "this tribute to motherhood was offered by Congress in order that these women who made such glorious sacrifices in the World War might visit the scenes of their sons' great heroism."<sup>561</sup> By saying that the pilgrimage was "offered" by Congress, the article highlighted that the trip was a service from the government requested by the Gold Star women.<sup>562</sup> Invoking the rhetoric of republican motherhood (but omitting the widows), the article described the mothers' service as raising their sons into men and sending them to battle. This made it "peculiarly fitting that a nation should pay tribute to its motherhood," for, as Milton said, "they also serve who only stand and wait."<sup>563</sup>

Dignitaries involved with the pilgrimage agreed that the Gold Star women served and sacrificed during the war. At the "tea-reception" held at the Restaurant Laurent in Paris for Party "A" of the pilgrimage on May 26, 1932, the American ambassador to France, Walter E. Edge, echoed these sentiments. He declared that 1932 inaugurated "the third year that the American Government has given the opportunity for the representatives of American womanhood who made greater sacrifices than those who actually laid down their lives, to visit France and the shrines

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<sup>561</sup> "A Man's Best Friend," *The National Tribune*, May 14, 1931, in album titled "Press Clippings Mothers and Widows Pilgrimage to the Cemeteries of Europe," Box 348, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

of your immortal loved ones.”<sup>564</sup> Edge acknowledged the pilgrimages as veteranist-commemorations done by the government on behalf of the pilgrims at their request. General Pershing agreed, and proclaimed that “no group of Americans knows more deeply, more completely what war means than a Gold Star Mother or Widow. It is she who makes the real sacrifice, she who knows how to lay the most precious gift upon the altar of freedom more than any other.”<sup>565</sup> He even told them that “I feel very greatly, and I want to thank you in my own name for what you did for the victory of the American army, which of course means the victory of the Allies.”<sup>566</sup> Pershing claimed to believe that these women made the war’s hardest sacrifices.

The ABMC cemeteries and memorials reminded Europeans of America’s participation in the war and glorified the AEF. They helped the U.S. claim a place in the postwar international political system and they symbolically projected American power overseas.<sup>567</sup> These sites demanded what one scholar called “certain privileges for the United States in other lands” and served as “a tool for consolidating America’s newly adopted international agenda in the postwar period.”<sup>568</sup> For example, the Montfaucon Memorial that commemorated the American victory in the Meuse-Argonne offensive towers over the countryside from atop a hill. Visible for miles, it

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<sup>564</sup> “Speeches made at tea-reception at Restaurant Laurent on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1932, Party “A”—Gold Star Mothers and Widows: Ambassador Walter E. Edge,” Folder: 319.1 Pilgrimage Gold Star Party A. 1932, Box, 369, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Robin, *Enclaves of America*, 3-4. For more on the diplomatic purposes of the pilgrimages see: Graham, 72-73 and Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 100-106; Richard Hulver, “Remains in Peace: The Diplomacy of American Military Bodies in France, 1919-1972,” Ph.D. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 2015.

<sup>568</sup> Robin, 30-31.

asserts the U.S. military's perception that the AEF turned the tide of the war (figure 4.3).<sup>569</sup>



Figure 4.3: Montfaucon American Monument, France. Note the height of this classically inspired monument and the stairs leading up to its perch on the top of a large hill. July 2012. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

Whether or not they were conscious of it, Gold Star families who chose to bury their loved ones in an overseas military cemetery instead of repatriating them enabled these cemeteries to fulfil various political purposes. Memorials alone could not achieve the diplomatic goals of the U.S. Hundreds of military cemeteries from the different combatant nations peppered the fields of France and Belgium and embedded

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<sup>569</sup> American Battle Monuments Commission, "Montfaucon American Monument," American Battle Monuments Commission, n.d. <<http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/montfaucon-american-monument>> (30 September 2014).

the blood of their men into the landscape of the Western Front (figure 4.4).<sup>570</sup> The U.S. needed overseas cemeteries to position the nation equally alongside the other combatants, something they could not do without the bodies of American service members. Although it may or may not have been their intention, Gold Star women served the nation by relinquishing the bodies of their loved ones.<sup>571</sup> They surrendered the ability to visit a grave near their homes and entrusted the eternal care of their relative to the state. In the eyes of the government, this service and sacrifice elevated these Gold Star women above others who chose repatriation.



Figure 4.4: Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium. This British cemetery is run by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the British equivalent and predecessor of the American Battle Monuments Commission. May 2009. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

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<sup>570</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 37-50. For more on the First World War cemeteries established by the British see: David Crane, *Empires of the Dead: How One Man's Vision Led to the Creation of WWI's War Graves* (London: William Collins, 2013).

<sup>571</sup> For more on how the bodies of American casualties were used for diplomatic purposes see: Hulver, "Remains in Peace: The Diplomacy of American Military Bodies in France, 1919-1972."

The government recognized the Gold Star pilgrims' assistance in promoting a powerful international image of the U.S. and fostering ties of friendship and peace with Europe. Senator Robert Wagner believed that "the ranks of mothers and sweethearts would constitute a new expeditionary force and a first line of defense for peace. Europe would see us in a new light—not as fighting doughboys, nor as gallant legionnaires, but as a nation of homes and families whose members are capable of the most pious sentiments."<sup>572</sup>

The French military praised the pilgrims for their help in fostering a positive Franco-American diplomatic relationship. At a reception for the pilgrims on August 18, 1932, French General Pagezy praised the pilgrims for choosing to bury their loved ones in France.<sup>573</sup> He told them that: "It is a great honor to us to have you maintain their tombs in France. It is a deed of which we understand the full meaning and which we feel profoundly...we keep very piously this sacred trust. It is to us a proof of the eternal friendship that has always existed and will always exist between our two nations."<sup>574</sup> Although the cemeteries were under American care, the pilgrims recognized the sacred nature of the cemeteries and battle sites on French soil.

Throughout the pilgrimages, French citizens emphasized the importance of the cemeteries that bound the Gold Star women to France. The Société Bienvenue Française, a French organization committed to promoting intellectual and moral

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<sup>572</sup> "Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Military Affairs United States Senate, Seventieth Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 5494 S.2681 S. 5332, Bills to Enable the Mothers and Unmarried Widows of the Deceased Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines of the American Forces Interred in the Cemeteries of Europe to make a Pilgrimage to these Cemeteries," Part 2, February 12, 1929, pg. 27, ProQuest Congressional Publications, <[congressional.proquest.com/congressional](http://congressional.proquest.com/congressional)> (29 September 2014).

<sup>573</sup> "Speech of General Pagezy at Reception August 18, 1932," Box 2012.94, Julia C. Underwood Pilgrimage Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.



exchanges between nations, presented each pilgrim with a small bag of French soil made from conjoined pieces of the American and French flags (figure 4.5).<sup>575</sup> At a 1932 “tea-reception,” a representative of this society told the pilgrims that they thought “you should keep with you something of the remembrance of the places where you have been, and of the soil of France where your beloved have so gloriously lain down their lives. Therefore we have asked you to accept from our society a little bag, and in that bag earth of France which is sacred to you.”<sup>576</sup> A letter that accompanied the bags explained that it was “a little memorial present, from your pious pilgrimage to France” and that it was “filled with the earth of France, which is sacred to you, as it is to us, because of all the young heroes who rest in our soil.”<sup>577</sup> The Société Bienvenue Française regarded the Gold Star pilgrimages as sacred commemorative journeys rooted in the land where Americans fought and died. They wanted these souvenirs to serve as a memory of the trip and the French *lieux de memoire* so that the women could actually bring the battlefield home with them.

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<sup>575</sup> Letter from La Bienvenue Française to Pilgrims, Summer 1932, Box 2012.94, Julia C. Underwood Pilgrimage Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>576</sup> “Speeches made at tea-reception at Restaurant Laurent on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1932, Party “A”—Gold Star Mothers and Widows: Monsieur de Billy,” Folder: 319.1 Pilgrimage Gold Star Party A. 1932, Box, 369, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>577</sup> Letter from La Bienvenue Française to Pilgrims.



Figure 4.5: The symbolic bag of French soil given to Pilgrim Mrs. Julia C. Underwood by La Société Bienvenue Française. Julia C. Underwood Pilgrimage Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. Photograph courtesy of the National WWI Museum.

The Army treated the pilgrims as participants of the war and presented them with an official armband and badge to wear on the trip to distinguish them from normal American tourists. During a separate shipboard ceremony, the United States Lines presented each pilgrim with a special gold medal to be worn around their necks as they sailed on the company's ocean liners (figure 4.6).<sup>578</sup> Aesthetically, these badges resembled military medals and aligned the pilgrims with male veterans and symbolically equated their sacrifices with military service. The top of each Army badge contained a personalized identification plate engraved with the pilgrim's name.<sup>579</sup> A red, white, and blue ribbon was affixed to this name plate, below which

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<sup>578</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 218; Medals and Program for Memorial Service on board the SS Leviathan, August 12, 1932, Box 2012.94, Julia C. Underwood Pilgrimage Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>579</sup> Medals and Program for Memorial Service on board the SS Leviathan, August 12, 1932.

hung a medal. This medal consisted of an American eagle on top of two American flags that rested on a medallion. In the center of this medallion was the iconic gold star surrounded by the words “pilgrimage of Mothers and Widows” that identified the wearer as a Gold Star pilgrim.<sup>580</sup> Authorized by the War Department and issued by the Quartermaster Corps, this badge served as a pseudo-military medal that honored the pilgrims for their wartime service just as the WWI Victory Medal honored military veterans and marked them as having served their country.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> The War Mother Goes “Over There,” by Major Louis C. Wilson, Q.M.C, in *The Quartermaster Review*” May-June 1930, Pg. 22, in album titled “Press Clippings Mothers and Widows Pilgrimage to the Cemeteries of Europe,” Box 348, RG 92, NACP. These medals and the way they made these civilian women part of the U.S.’s military apparatus bear testament to the accuracy of Michael S. Sherry’s argument about the militarization of the U.S. since the 1930s. They are also unsettlingly similar to the military-style medals given to German women by the Nazis, such as the Cross of Honor of the German Mother given to women who bore a certain number of healthy children to serve the Reich. Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s*, ix-xii. For information on the WWI Victory Medal see for example: Naval History and Heritage Command, “World War I Victory Medal,” *Naval History and Heritage Command*, n.d.

<<http://www.history.navy.mil/medals/ww1vic.htm>> (13 December 2014); Alexander J. Laslo, *The Interallied Victory Medals of World War I* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Dorado Publishing, 1992), 86-123.



Figure 4.6: Julia C. Underwood's Pilgrimage medals. From left to right: the Official War Department Medal, United States Lines Medal, and Gold Star pin. Julia C. Underwood Pilgrimage Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. Photograph courtesy of the National WWI Museum.

#### *The Gold Star Pilgrimages as Veteranist-Commemorations*

Although not specifically referred to as community service, analysis of the Gold Star pilgrimages demonstrates that they constituted a form of veteranist-commemoration. Every Gold Star woman who chose an overseas burial, or whose loved one was missing and unaccounted for, received an invitation to participate in the pilgrimage completely free of charge. By paying for the pilgrimage, the government performed a charitable act at the request of these women, who saw it as the government's obligation to them. The government admitted that no physical memorial or tangible offering such as money or certificates could fully honor and commemorate the Americans buried overseas and their mothers or widows. The government could

properly honor the sacrifice of these women only by sending them on a pilgrimage to the overseas cemeteries.

The cooperation of the ABMC indicated that the very agency in charge of traditional commemoration overseas also understood the value and necessity of veteranist-commemorations in addition to statuary memorials. General Pershing, Chairman of the ABMC, admitted to the pilgrims that “no monument can sufficiently honor these fallen dead too greatly, nor can be erected in any material form anything that will express completely the feelings of gratitude that are in our hearts for what they did for us.”<sup>582</sup> Even though he devoted his postwar war life to building physical monuments to the AEF in Europe, Pershing recognized their limits. As debate continued about the best way to memorialize the war, Pershing did not fully reject traditional physical memorials, but conceded that projects like the Gold Star pilgrimage augmented these memorials and commemorated the war by helping its survivors.

Testimony from the pilgrims indicated that the pilgrimages succeeded in comforting them and that they understood the trip as a type of veteranist-commemoration done on their behalf. One pilgrim believed that trip was “a great comfort to every pilgrim mother I’m sure, to have had this rare privilege.”<sup>583</sup> She recognized that the government provided an experience that might otherwise have been impossible for many of these women. She also returned feeling patriotic, and

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<sup>582</sup> “Speeches made at tea-reception at Restaurant Laurent on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1932, Party “A”—Gold Star Mothers and Widows: General J.J. Pershing,” Folder: 319.1 Pilgrimage Gold Star Party A. 1932, Box, 369, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>583</sup> “A Guest of the Government” in “File 516—Pilgrimage, Gold Star,” Box 352, RG 92, NACP.

explained that if she were a man she would get an eagle tattooed upon her chest.<sup>584</sup> She “went over 100% American and returned 200%,” feeling much gratitude as she shouted ““Vive la France,” and exclaimed ““Vive la America,” my beloved country.”<sup>585</sup> In July 1930, Maud L. Rieves wrote a letter of thanks for the pilgrimage and requested that she be remembered “to Capt. Earnest who had charge of our bunch while in France and who was untiring in his efforts to serve the Gold Star Mothers.”<sup>586</sup> By using the phrase “to serve,” Mrs. Rieves indicated that she understood the pilgrimage as a service done for the Gold Star women by the government.

The pilgrimage profoundly affected its participants and they spoke of its positive influence on their emotional recovery. On July 21, 1930, Mrs. Callie M. Laird of Little Rock, Arkansas, thanked the War Department for the trip, which she understood “was made possible by the generosity of the government.”<sup>587</sup> She described how:

while it was especially sad at the cemeteries, at the same time, our burden was made lighter when we saw with our own eyes, the wonderful manner in which the cemeteries were kept and of which previously we had only our vague imagination. I am so glad now after this visit that I decided to leave the remains where they are buried...I am at home now, thoroughly satisfied that even tho we sacrificed so much for Democracy, yet the Government had done so much for us that our burden is made lighter.<sup>588</sup>

Mrs. Laird’s pilgrimage eased her heartbreak and allowed her to see firsthand how honorably the overseas cemeteries commemorated the American dead. Visiting these

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<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Letter from Mrs. Callie M. Laird to the War Department, July 21, 1930, Folder 330.1 Pilgrimage Gold Star 1930, Box 376. RG 92, NACP.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid.

sites convinced her that she made the right decision when she chose an overseas burial. Hilde A. Meystre, the mother of Private Emile F. Meystre buried at Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, penned the poem “Our Hearts O’Erflow” upon her return from the 1930 pilgrimage.<sup>589</sup> The poem described how both Gold Star mothers and their sons sacrificed for freedom, and ended with two verses that described the pilgrimage as a government service that aided the pilgrims:

We are the Gold Star mothers,  
Back from La Belle France.  
Back to our own loved country,  
That gave us this wondrous chance,  
Gave us a time of pleasure  
To ease our saddened hearts,  
Things we never dreamed of  
We saw in those treasured marts.

We thank the Congress of U.S.A.  
And all others that helped the way  
To give us mothers a perfect day.<sup>590</sup>

Meystre’s repetition of the word “gave” emphasized that the pilgrimage was a form of veteranist-commemoration provided by the U.S. government at the pilgrims’ behest. By using “pleasure” and “saddened hearts” back to back, she showed the contrasting elements of the pilgrimage that made it successful. Meystre understood that by passing the legislation and providing the trip, Congress honored the pilgrims through veteranist-commemorations. By ending the poem with gratitude, she confirmed its success in achieving the goals of veteranist-commemorations.

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<sup>589</sup> “Our Hearts O’Erflow” by Hilda A. Meystre, in album titled “Press Clippings Mothers and Widows Pilgrimage to the Cemeteries of Europe,” Box 348, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

*The Gold Star Pilgrimage Rest Houses as a Physical Manifestation of Veteranist-Commemorations*

The temporary rest houses constructed at the ABMC cemeteries for the use of the pilgrims represented the physical manifestation of the government's act of veteranist-commemoration in executing the trip. Built specifically to accommodate women's needs and to provide them with a private place for comfort and rest, they created a distinctly female space on the predominantly male military landscape at the cemeteries. Despite the gendered stereotypes they adhered to, the rest houses attested to the Army's dedication to the pilgrimage's success and to the women's comfort and safety.

The Quartermaster Corps constructed these rest houses at several ABMC cemeteries to ensure the health of the pilgrims because of the isolated locations of some of the cemeteries and their lack of adequate toilet, refreshment, and rest facilities.<sup>591</sup> Although most of the widows were middle-aged or slightly younger, the mothers were often older and in poorer health, which concerned the Quartermaster Corps.<sup>592</sup> Since the trip proved physically demanding, the officers wanted to provide appropriate facilities throughout the journey; health and safety were of paramount importance.

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<sup>591</sup> "Col. Ellis Report of 1930 Pilgrimage in Europe. Submitted March 7, 1931,"pg 16. NARA RG 92 Box 348 Folder "Reports Annual New York and Europe 1931." Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 206. Ellis is a central figure in Budreau's book.

<sup>592</sup> "Col. Ellis Report of 1930 Pilgrimage in Europe. Submitted March 7, 1931,"pg 1-2, Folder "Reports Annual New York and Europe 1931," Box 348, RG 92, NACP. Colonel Ellis stated that the average age of the Pilgrims was between 61 and 65. See also: Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 206. The Quartermaster Corps gathered detailed reports about the pilgrims' health prior to the trip and kept detailed records of their health during the journey. See: NARA RG 92 Box No. 59 Folder "1932." This folder contains medical reports from the pilgrims' doctors about their health conditions before the trip and Official Pilgrimage lists stating their conditions of health.



The Army used the pilgrimages to try to improve the military's reputation, and the national press coverage of the pilgrimages might have influenced their decision to build the rest houses since they could face a potential public relations disaster if the trip compromised the pilgrims' health.<sup>593</sup> If successful, the pilgrimages could positively publicize the Army during a time of public cynicism about the Great War.<sup>594</sup> By protecting the pilgrims' well-being, the rest houses demonstrated the Army's concern for their welfare and helped prevent potential criticisms or controversies.

The rest houses originated in several similar American building types common in the decades around the 1930s: ladies rest rooms, military base hostess houses, and country clubs (figure 4.7). Recognized parts of the American landscape, these structures accommodated women and families in public spaces and predominantly male environments.<sup>595</sup> Because the rest houses were vernacular structures—buildings that emerge from the everyday, commonplace landscape—their design, function, and distinctly feminine nature would have been familiar to the pilgrims and the Army. By imitating these buildings, the Army included the pilgrims

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<sup>593</sup> See: "Scrapbook of Col. Richard T. Ellis."

<sup>594</sup> Michael Sherry describes the early 1930s as a time of "the First World War's sour legacy of revolution, nationalism, and debt" were "fresh to Americans." Sherry, 15.

<sup>595</sup> For more information on the architectural origins of the rest houses see: Allison S. Finkelstein, "A Landscape of Military Memory: The Gold Star Pilgrimage Rest Houses of 1930-33," forthcoming with *Buildings and Landscapes: The Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*. For information on ladies rest rooms see: Kristin L. Britanik, "Where are the Ladies' Rest Rooms?: The Evolution of Women-Only Resting Rooms Amid Social Changes of the Early Twentieth-Century," Master's thesis, The University of Maryland, College Park, 2012; Carroll Van West, "Assessing Significance and Integrity in the National Register Process: Questions of Race, Class, and Gender, In *Preservation of what, for whom? A critical look at historical significance.*, ed. Michael A. Tomlan (Ithaca, NY: The National Council for Preservation Education, 1998); 109-116. For more information on military bases hostess house see: Cynthia Brandimarte, "Women on the Home Front: Hostess Houses during World War I," Vol. 42, No. 4 (Winter 2008): 201-222; 202. For more information on early twentieth-century on country clubs see: James M. Mayo, *The American Country Club: Its Origins and Development* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 134.

at the cemeteries, although the rest houses simultaneously separated the women from the main commemorative narrative at the cemeteries and relegated them to the realm of mourning mothers and widows, even though they actively influenced the memorialization work at the cemeteries.<sup>596</sup>



Figure 4.7: YWCA Hostess House at Plattsburg Barracks. From “Report of Hostess House Committee.” Note its stylistic similarity to the Gold Star pilgrimage rest houses. War Work Council, National Board of the Young Woman’s Christian Associations, Note the large front porch, front gable, and other elements that show a similarity to the Gold Star rest houses. From: <https://archive.org/details/reportofhostessh00nati>

<sup>596</sup> In considering how women fit into the male military landscape of commemoration, the author took heed of Sally McMurry’s call for scholars of vernacular architecture to integrate women’s history more thoroughly into their work. Angel Kwolek-Folland’s suggestions for using gender as a category of analysis in vernacular architecture studies and Joan W. Scott’s concept of gender as a category of historical analysis were also consulted. Sally McMurry, “Women in the American Vernacular Landscape,” *Material Culture*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 1988): 33-49. Angel Kwolek-Folland, “Gender as a Category of Analysis in Vernacular Architecture Studies,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, V, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995): 3-10; Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec 1986): 1053-1075.

The architecture of the rest houses indicated their purpose as places of comfort and familiarity to the pilgrims.<sup>597</sup> Similar to stateside bungalows, these one-story vernacular structures were designed in the craftsman style popular in the early twentieth century.<sup>598</sup> In 1930, Colonel Ellis described the rest houses as “attractive wooden one-story houses laid out and furnished something along the lines which one would expect to find in an attractive country-club” with “a comfortable, shady porch and a large open fire-place.”<sup>599</sup> Based on photographs, Ellis’ accurately described the rest houses; those at the Meuse-Argonne, Oise-Aisne, Aisne-Marne, and St. Mihiel looked very similar if not exactly alike (figures 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11). The rest houses had hipped roofs with a central projecting cross gable on the front façade and a Palladian window centered in the gable. The structures included decorative projecting false beams in the gables and exposed rafters under the eaves, classic elements of craftsman houses.<sup>600</sup> The roofing material cannot be determined but had a decorative pattern that resembled diamond-shaped shingles. According to Ellis’ description, it can be inferred that the horizontal exterior siding was wood. The large double front doors had six lights in the upper two-thirds, matching the design of the windows. On their front and side facades, the houses included what appear to be paired casement windows with two tall sashes that open out from the center.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> Photographs and documentary evidence of the rest houses enable an architectural examination of the structures, even though no rest Gold Star houses or blueprints of them survive. For an in-depth architectural analysis of the rest houses see: Finkelstein, “A Landscape of Military Memory: The Gold Star Pilgrimage Rest Houses of 1930-33.”

<sup>598</sup> McAlester, 453; Finkelstein.

<sup>599</sup> “Col. Ellis Report of 1930 Pilgrimage in Europe. Submitted March 7, 1931,” pg. 16, Folder “Reports Annual New York and Europe 1931,” Box 348, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>600</sup> McAlester, 454. These elements of the craftsman style were meant to reflect the arts and crafts’ movement’s appreciation of craftsmanship and oriental architecture.

<sup>601</sup> Special thanks to Dr. Don Linebaugh for advice on how to describe these windows and other architectural elements of the rest houses.



Figure 4.8: Party “O”—August 19, 1931. “In front of Rest House, Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery. Captain [Boyette], Lieutenant Wiley, Cemetery Superintendent Shields, Major Campbell.” National Archives, College Park.



Figure 4.9: Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial, rest house, undated. Note the landscaping around the building which included what appear to be plants growing up the porch supports. National Archives, College Park.





Figure 4.10: Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial, rest house, undated. Note the 'private' sign that indicated that the rest house was not to be entered by regular cemetery visitors. National Archives, College Park.



Figure 4.11: St. Mihiel American Cemetery and Memorial, rest house, undated. Positioned close to a grave plot, this rest house must have been visible to most of the cemetery's visitors while the nearby graves provided a stark reminder of the purpose of the pilgrimage. This image encapsulates the pilgrimage's combination of permanent statuary memorials and veteranist-commemorations. National Archives, College Park.

Many photographs show furniture on the porches and plants climbing up the porch supports, suggesting that the pilgrims utilized these outdoor spaces. The rest houses were surrounded by plants and landscaping, although the landscape features near the rest houses were more informal than the highly formalized cemetery horticulture. Evidence of the exact location of the rest houses at the cemeteries does not survive, so their relation to the other elements of the cemetery cannot be determined.<sup>602</sup>

The interiors of the rest houses contained “tables, comfortable chairs and a rest room for the use of the nurses and the hostess, as well as a kitchen equipped with electric stove, water heater and coffee [perculator].”<sup>603</sup> The large military maps on the walls provided the only indication that these rooms were not located in a typical American home or country club. These maps almost seem like a male, military intrusion into the home-like environment at the rest houses. An interior image of the St. Mihiel rest house even showed Lt. Lucas giving an illustrated talk to the pilgrims using the map over the fireplace, possibly an account of the St. Mihiel Offensive (figure 4.12). While intended to be female-oriented areas of relaxation, the rest houses also served educational purposes, with presentations by officers who led the trips.

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<sup>602</sup> The author has not yet found documents showing the location of the rest houses in the National Archives in College Park, the ABMC’s Headquarters in Garches, France, or at four ABMC cemeteries (Suresnes, Meuse-Argonne, St. Mihiel, and Brookwood). In discussions with current ABMC employees in 2012 and 2013, the general consensus was that the location of the rest houses is still a mystery. Additionally, while visiting the Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel cemeteries in 2012 the author was unable to find any physical evidence or footprints of the rest houses visible to the naked eye.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid. It is important to note that the rest houses did not contain any bedrooms, apartments, or spaces for the pilgrims to sleep; they were not for overnight accommodations. The pilgrims typically stayed at hotels in nearby towns and the rest houses were used solely for rest, relaxation, and toilet needs while during the cemetery visits.

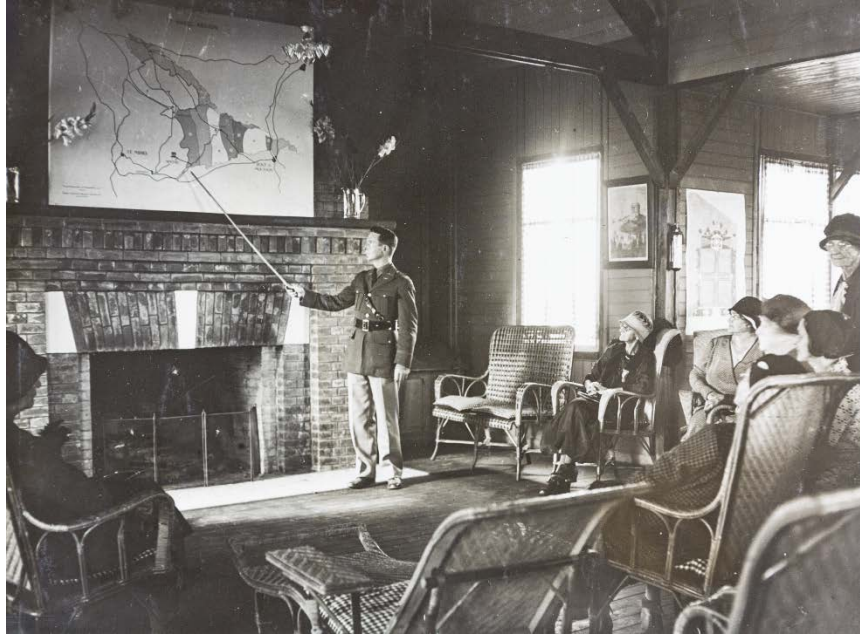


Figure 4.12: Lt. Lucas giving an illustrated talk to pilgrims at the Rest House at St. Mihiel Cemetery, undated. This image demonstrates the contrast between the military and the home-like atmosphere of the rest houses. Note the exposed beams in the ceiling; these were a common feature in arts and crafts style architecture. National Archives, College Park.

The rest houses and the hostesses that ran them succeeded in providing comfort and privacy to the pilgrims during the cemetery visits. Colonel Ellis reported that their construction “undoubtedly was for the good of the pilgrimage and received favorable commendation not only from official visitors but from the Pilgrims themselves.”<sup>604</sup> In a 1930 letter of thanks to Colonel Ellis, pilgrims Mrs. Hattie B. Bisbee and Mrs. Sarah Parker reminisced about “the Hostess Mrs. Abbot[m] and Madam Juliette who in their sweet sympathetic manner made each visit to the cemetery much easier to bear.”<sup>605</sup> WOSL member Eleanor Barnes visited the rest

<sup>604</sup> “Col. Ellis Report of 1930 Pilgrimage in Europe. Submitted March 7, 1931,” pg. 17, Folder “Reports Annual New York and Europe 1931,” Box 348, RG 92, NACP.

<sup>605</sup> Undated letter to Ellis from Mrs. Hattie B Bisbee and Mrs. Sarah Parker, Folder “330.1 Pilgrimage Gold Star 1930,” Box 376, RG 92, NACP.

house at St. Mihiel in 1930 after the WOSL convention in Paris. She reported in *Carry On* that the St. Mihiel rest house “did much towards bracing up the mothers after their difficult visit. They all voiced the same sentiments—they were quite satisfied to go back home leaving their boys in this lovely spot so carefully tended, and they were more than happy because of all the Government had done for them.”<sup>606</sup> The battle-scarred landscape might have been traumatic for the pilgrims to visit, but the rest houses tempered that trauma by evoking the comforts of home and providing a female place of respite.

The stark visual contrast between the small, vernacular rest houses and the formal, monumental architecture of the ABMC cemeteries and monuments visually sets out the debate between veteranist-commemorations and physical monuments. Located on the same landscapes, the rest houses stood out among the formal chapels, rows of headstones, and triumphant memorials of the ABMC. The monumental architecture of the ABMC represented a type of formal neoclassicism often utilized in American civic architecture, and in comparison, the rest houses must have seemed small and rustic. The cemetery superintendents’ houses and their reception rooms in the French eclectic style or French Romanesque Revival style, although designed by architects who practiced in America, had a distinctive European flair compared with the unpretentious American style of the rest houses (figure 4.13). The rest houses demonstrated how old and new forms of memorialization coexisted during the interwar period as commemoration underwent an incomplete transformation. They

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<sup>606</sup> Women’s Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection, Box 1922-1932, Folder 1931, Volume X, No. 1, February 1931, 13-14.



fulfilled their commemorative purpose only when inhabited with the living bodies of the pilgrims who took refuge within their walls. Built specifically to be used by women as they memorialized their loved ones and were honored themselves, these vernacular rest houses embodied the idea of veteranist-commemorations at a site dominated by traditional memorials.



Figure 4.13: Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial, Visitor's Building, 1932. This structure's stonework and arches evoke the sensibilities of the French Romanesque Revival style. National Archives, College Park.

The demolition of the rest houses after the pilgrimages erased the visible evidence of women's commemorative roles at the cemeteries during the Gold Star program. Women were never intended to be a permanent part of the narrative told at the cemeteries. Despite being built to serve and commemorate women, the destruction of the rest houses demonstrated that women were only temporarily

accorded a space on these landscapes. Women's roles in military commemoration were often limited, restricted, and ephemeral, especially when so much of women's memorial projects constituted intangible veteranist-commemorations and existed through familial relationships that grew dimmer with the deaths of the war's survivors.

### *Conclusion*

The Gold Star pilgrimages constituted veteranist-commemorations conducted at the request of the Gold Star mothers and widows because of the perceived healing power of a visit to the overseas cemeteries that held their loved ones. The Gold Star pilgrims believed that they had served and sacrificed through the wartime deaths of their children and husbands, and through their decision to bury them in an overseas American cemetery. They recognized their contributions to the war effort and the U.S.'s postwar political and diplomatic goals and asked the government to send them on a trip to those graves. They believed it was the government's obligation to provide them with this trip which they felt represented the most appropriate way to commemorate their service and those they lost.

By agreeing to sponsor and pay for the pilgrimage, the U.S. government concurred that these Gold Star women served and sacrificed for the nation. They believed that they deserved official recognition and agreed with the pilgrims' assertion that the best way to commemorate their services and the lives of their relatives was not through the construction of a physical memorial, but by sponsoring

this pilgrimage. As veteranist-commemorations, the pilgrimages honored the pilgrims and memorialized their kin through a trip intended to ease their grief.

The Quartermaster Corps went to great lengths to provide the pilgrims with a meaningful and safe experience. The temporary rest houses they erected for the pilgrims at several of the ABMC cemeteries represented the physical manifestation of their efforts to serve the pilgrims and help them heal. But the pilgrimages and the rest houses relegated women to a separate female realm of military commemoration at the male-dominated cemeteries. When the rest houses were demolished at the end of the pilgrimages, the physical evidence of women's importance to overseas military commemoration disappeared, demonstrating the temporary inclusion of women in the historical narrative of military commemoration and the nation itself.

The fact that these buildings no longer exist does not lessen their significance or that of the pilgrimages they facilitated. The Gold Star pilgrimages played a crucial role in reorganizing and rearticulating America's collective mourning and remembrance of World War One. The money the government spent on the program during the Great Depression, the extensive press coverage of the trips, and John Ford's 1933 Hollywood portrayal of the program showed how effective women had become in claiming their place at the World War One memory table.<sup>607</sup> In fact, some Gold Star women even believed they had special authority over the public image of the pilgrimage. In January 1933, Gold Star mother Katherine M. Gallagher, Mrs.

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<sup>607</sup> Based on the large number of newspaper clippings found in the Gold Star Pilgrimage records in RG 92, it can be surmised that the Gold Star Pilgrimages received extensive coverage in newspapers across the country. Numerous boxes within in this record group contain newspaper clippings about the events. Rebecca Jo Plant's use of newspaper article also attests to the high level of news coverage focusing on the pilgrimages.

Elizabeth Conley's friend, wrote to the Fox Film Corporation and asked to be consulted on John Ford's film, *Pilgrimage*, because, she wrote, "the pilgrimage was very sacred to us and we may not wish to see it commercialized."<sup>608</sup>

The Gold Star pilgrimages demonstrated three crucial points about American women's participation in the commemoration of World War One. First, despite being prohibited from serving in most branches of the military, women influenced the military in terms of policy-making and commemoration both during and after the war.<sup>609</sup> Second, the physical evidence of women's influential roles in the postwar commemorative culture, such as the rest houses, is often absent from the commemorative landscape today. And third, some of the most important evidence of women's roles in military commemoration was intangible from the start. Conceived of as a living memorial program to serve the Gold Star pilgrims, the pilgrimages never fully constituted a bricks and mortar memorial able to stand in perpetuity and attest to women's importance in the commemorative discourse. As a type of veteranist-commemoration implemented by the government, the Gold Star pilgrimages existed only for a certain moment in time through the lived experiences of the pilgrims. The memory of these women's influence diminished with the removal of the rest houses and the deaths of the pilgrims. As the next chapter shows, even the more lasting, tangible evidence of women's roles in the war and its

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<sup>608</sup> Letter from Mrs. Katherine M. Gallagher to Fox Film, Inc., January 23, 1933, *Pilgrimage* (Fox, 19-) MPAA/PCA, Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library.

<sup>609</sup> At the start of WWI, women already served in the Army and Navy as uniformed nurses but they lacked both enlisted and officer ranking. On March 21, 1917 the Navy announced that women would officially be able to join the Navy and Marine Corps as Yeoman (F). Ebbert and Hall, *The First, the Few, the Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*, ix, 1. During World War One, women also served the nation as volunteers in organizations such as the Red Cross, YMCA, YWCA, and many others as well as by volunteering on the home front and working in war industries.

commemoration, such as their wartime uniforms, received only a temporary inclusion in the commemorative and historical narrative produced in America's most prominent museum.

## **Chapter 5: Exhibiting Veteranist-Commemorations: American Women's First World War Uniforms at the Smithsonian's National Museum**

The National Mall in Washington D.C. contains a unique memorial to American women's contributions to the First World War. Unlike the other memorials on the Mall, this one is not visible to the thousands of tourists who visit the National Mall, for it is not made of marble or granite, nor is it a structure that occupies a footprint on 'America's backyard.' Rather, this memorial is neatly stored in drawers inside the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, hidden from view, yet still present at this premier repository of American memory.

This memorial is the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America's uniforms collection, an artifact collection composed of uniforms and related ephemera worn by American women during the First World War. In 1919, the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA) began collecting examples of these uniforms for an exhibition in the Smithsonian's National Museum. The NSCDA created the collection to preserve and commemorate American women's wartime service through the acquisition and exhibition of their uniforms.

The NSCDA's uniforms collection represented an example of another way that American women commemorated the First World War through veteranist-commemorations. The NSCDA defined this collection and its subsequent exhibition at the Smithsonian as a memorial that honored American women's wartime contributions. By donating their time, resources, and energy to create the collection,

the NSCDA performed a service to two intertwined and overlapping constituencies: the community of women veterans, and the national community. First, the exhibition served the uniformed American women of the war by commemorating their service and preserving their history. Second, it served the national community by reminding the American public about women's wartime efforts and including that story in the war's narrative. The collection also served visitors to the National Museum by diversifying the World War displays and providing evidence of women's wartime services for their education and entertainment.

The NSCDA's uniforms collection represented a functional memorial with a distinct public purpose created through the philanthropic acts done by NSCDA and the artifact donors to serve these different publics. By spearheading this collection and devoting their time to its execution, the NSCDA developed a veteranist-commemoration project that aimed to include American women in the historical memory of the First World War. The donors of the uniforms contributed to this project when they relinquished the physical evidence of their wartime experiences to preserve the legacy of their service and memorialize their comrades.

Through their donations, this group of women built a memorial made of material culture. Although the NSCDA might not have understood it at the time, this memorial collection eschewed the confines of statuary memorials for the versatility of a museum exhibit. Their actions represented another moment of transition away from statuary monuments and towards more abstract, purpose-driven memorials.

Because the Smithsonian removed the collection from public display in 1929, once again women received only a partial and ephemeral inclusion in the historical

and commemorative narrative of the First World War. Mirroring their temporary inclusion in the military apparatus of the war, and at the landscapes of overseas military memory as demonstrated by the Gold Star Pilgrimages, the uniforms exhibit testified to the partial and impermanent inclusion of American women into the historical memory of the First World War.

### *The Background and Context of the NSCDA Uniforms Collection*

Previous studies of the Colonial Dames uniforms collection have discussed the history and meaning of women's uniforms in terms of female citizenship and military service, both during the war and afterwards as part of the NSCDA collection.<sup>610</sup>

During the war, Margaret Vining and Bart Hacker asserted:

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<sup>610</sup> The majority of these studies are by Margaret Vining and Barton C Hacker, two curators in the Armed Forces History Division of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. This chapter uses their work as a foundation for its argument. Margaret Vining and Barton C. Hacker, "Uniforms Make the Woman," in *Materializing the Military. Artefacts VI: Military Technology*, ed. Bernard Finn and Barton C. Hacker (London: Science Museum Press, 2005); 1-12 and Margaret Vining and Barton C. Hacker, "From Camp Follower to Lady in Uniform: Women, Social Class and Military Institutions before 1920," *Contemporary European History* 10 (2001): 353-73; Barton C. Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of Military Women (c.1815-c.1914)" in *A Companion to Women's Military History*. The author first learned of the collection through Vining and Hacker's presentation at "A Century in the Shadow of the Great War: The International World War I Centennial Planning Conference" at the National WWI Museum at Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, MO in March 2013. Many thanks to Margaret and Bart for their support of this dissertation, and especially to Margaret for allowing the author access to the sources about the collection and providing much advice and support with the chapter. Margaret Vining helped secure the ultimate donation of the collection to the National Museum of American History in 1997 after years of confusion about the collection's fate as it remained in the Smithsonian's storage, yet still owned by the Colonial Dames. She and Hacker have acted as stewards of the collection and produced much research on the collection and its meaning. "Deed of Gift: Appendix," National Museum of American History Armed Forces History Division (hereafter NMAH), Colonial Dames Collection Documents, Folder: The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America—1998.0165. Additionally, Vivian Lea Young, conducted an in-depth study of the individual uniforms in the collection in her Master's thesis at George Washington University. Vivian Lea Young, "'Petticoats are Part of this Uniform:' American Women Volunteers of the First World War and Their Uniforms," Master's thesis, The George Washington University, 1987, Gelman Library Special Collections.



by wearing uniforms in voluntary associations, women identified themselves with the same principles of military order and discipline as men. At the same time, they reminded government officials and male voters of the gap between women's legal rights and the responsibilities as citizens they had willingly accepted and effectively fulfilled during the war.<sup>611</sup>

What differentiated women's involvement with the military during World War One from previous conflicts was the mass mobilization required to wage this total war.

Total war expanded women's participation in new ways so that women of every social and economic class participated in the war effort.<sup>612</sup> Uniforms distinguished nurses and other volunteers from lower-class female camp followers, who for centuries had been attached to armies.<sup>613</sup> By denoting an individual's membership in a specific group and distinguishing the wearer from the lower-class, women's World War One uniforms signified the status of the women who wore them.<sup>614</sup>

When the U.S. officially entered the war, American women donned uniforms like their British counterparts and the American women already serving in Europe. These uniforms contained layers of symbolic meaning connected to the history of women in uniform.<sup>615</sup> Women wore uniforms as part of civilian volunteer relief

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<sup>611</sup> Vining and Hacker, "Uniforms Make the Woman," 10.

<sup>612</sup> Vining and Hacker, "From Camp Follower to Lady in Uniform: Women, Social Class and Military Institutions before 1920," 360. See also: Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of Military Women (c.1815-c.1914)." Previously, women's participation in war had mostly been limited to lower class women such as camp followers and a few elite women in leadership roles

<sup>613</sup> Margaret Vining and Barton C. Hacker, "Volunteers Inspired by Conscription—Uniformed Women in World War 1," in *The Total War, The Total Defense, 1789-2000*, eds. Per Iko, Lars Ericson, and Gunnar Aselius (Stockholm: Swedish Commission on Military History, 2001), 347. For a discussion of the history of women's involvement in the military, women in uniform, and women's military history as a field of scholarship see: Barton C. Hacker and Margaret Vining, eds. *A Companion to Women's Military History* (London: Brill, 2012).

<sup>614</sup> Elizabeth Ewing, *Women in Uniform Through the Centuries* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1975), 11; Nathan Joseph, *Uniforms and Nonuniforms: Communication Through Clothing* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 1-3; Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1985), 277, 288.

<sup>615</sup> For example, women have used uniforms in religious life, educational institutions, scouting, nursing, servitude, nanny work, charity work, and sports. See: Ewing, 11-8. For more on the history of

organizations, contract organizations, the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, and the Navy Yeoman (F) and Marine Corps Reserve.<sup>616</sup> Often, these organizations used uniforms to increase women's standing, since a uniform conveyed an official status and could help women be taken seriously and respected by male colleagues.<sup>617</sup> These uniforms shaped the development and performance of women's identities and also operated as a form of control, since they required adherence to rules about how they were worn.<sup>618</sup> They contained underlying sets of values and norms that explained the relationship of the wearer to the organization to which they belonged, making uniforms an effective way for hierarchical bureaucracies to exert control over their members.<sup>619</sup> These uniforms also communicated to non-members and told them about the wearer's organizational affiliation, role in the community, their rank and authority in an organization, and established guidelines for acceptable behavior.<sup>620</sup> When worn by women, uniforms become complicated by social and gender norms, women's positions in their community, and their progress in society.<sup>621</sup> Just as men in uniform demonstrate notions of perceived masculinity, women in uniform are often seen as

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women and military uniforms see: Vining and Hacker, "Volunteers Inspired by Conscription—Uniformed Women in World War 1;" Barton C. Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of Military Women (c.1815-c.1914);" Jill Halcomb Smith, *Dressed for Duty: America's Women in Uniform, 1898-1973*, 2 vols. (San Jose, California: R. James Bender Publishing, 2001).

<sup>616</sup> For examples of women in uniform during World War One see: Jill Halcomb Smith, *Dressed for Duty*, Vol. 1.

<sup>617</sup> Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 89. Additionally, women's civilian fashions at the time reflected military identity in terms of trims, cut, and other stylistic features. These garments also demonstrated a visual allegiance to the war effort even though they were not uniforms. Special thanks to Katelin Lee for pointing this out.

<sup>618</sup> Craik, 4-5.

<sup>619</sup> Joseph, 2-3.

<sup>620</sup> Joseph, 3; Craik, 5.

<sup>621</sup> Ewing, 11.

crossing gender lines and are viewed within the intertwined concepts of sexuality, gender, social identity, and political status.<sup>622</sup>

Women's First World War uniforms thus held great significance. During the war, women's uniforms symbolized their claims to full citizenship, their patriotism, their adherence to military discipline, and, implicitly for some women, their desire for the franchise.<sup>623</sup> These uniforms revealed the changes experienced by American women during the conflict and contributed to the transformation of women's fashion that began in the roaring Twenties.<sup>624</sup> In the immediate postwar years, many former uniformed women proudly viewed their uniforms as a badge of honor that represented their wartime service. For this reason, the Women's Overseas Service League adopted their old wartime uniforms as their official organizational uniform.

In the postwar era, and even after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, commemorations of women's wartime service continued to deliver the political messages women's uniforms sent during the war. By preserving and exhibiting women's wartime uniforms at the Smithsonian's National Museum, the Colonial Dames used these garments and artifacts to advocate for the expansion of women's citizenship rights and inclusion in the military. The exhibition carried uniformed women's wartime aims into the postwar public culture.

To gain the most prestigious exposure of the uniforms collection and send its political messages to large audiences, NSCDA chose to exhibit their acquisitions at

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<sup>622</sup> Craik, 99.

<sup>623</sup> Vining and Hacker, "From Camp Follower to Lady in Uniform: Women, Social Class and Military Institutions before 1920," 360, 371; Vining and Hacker, "Volunteers Inspired by Conscription—Uniformed Women in World War 1," 349.

<sup>624</sup> Young, 60; James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History* (New York: Thames & Hudson World of Art, 2002), 229-233.

the Smithsonian Institution's United States National Museum. Established in 1846, by the First World War, the Smithsonian had achieved a national reputation as an important repository for historical artifacts.<sup>625</sup> From 1919 to 1920, just as the Colonial Dames began to create their collection, the National Museum underwent a major reorganization that removed the American history division from the Department of Anthropology and allotted it more exhibit space in the Arts and Industries Building.<sup>626</sup> Around the same time as this reorganization, through the cooperation of the military and the efforts of Smithsonian staff, the Smithsonian acquired a diverse collection of artifacts from the World War.<sup>627</sup> The collection opened to the public in November 1918 in the Arts and Industries Building, and by 1920 it included items such as flags, medals, airplanes, munitions, gas masks, weapons, and official army art.<sup>628</sup> The Smithsonian leadership valued this collection and exhibited it wherever they could find room, even as display space became more limited.<sup>629</sup> Eventually, they incorporated some of the Colonial Dames' uniforms into these displays.

After the First World War, other museums also developed collections of World War artifacts as memorial exhibits that commemorated that war. The Smithsonian

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<sup>625</sup> Smithsonian Institution Archives, "General History," *Smithsonian History*, n.d. <<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/general-history>> (9 May 2014); William S. Walker, *A Living Exhibition: The Smithsonian and the Transformation of the Universal Museum* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 40-42.

<sup>626</sup> Walker, 35-42.

<sup>627</sup> Margaret Vining and Barton C. Hacker, "Displaying the Great War in America: The War Exhibition of the United States National Museum (Smithsonian Institution), 1918 and Beyond," in *The Universal Heritage of Arms and Military History: Challenges and Choices in a Changing World* (Heeresgeschichtliches Museum: Wien, 2008), 27-32; Walker, 41.

<sup>628</sup> Vining and Hacker, "Displaying the Great War in America: The War Exhibition of the United States National Museum (Smithsonian Institution), 1918 and Beyond," 31-33; Walker, 36-41.

<sup>629</sup> The Smithsonian wanted to consolidate the World War collection as a cohesive unit to prevent these valuable artifacts from being scattered across the country, preventing a coherent narrative of the war from being preserved in a museum. Walker, 30.

recognized the commemorative power of museums, and wanted to transform their own World War collection into an independent museum that memorialized the conflict, similar to London's Imperial War Museum.<sup>630</sup> This national war museum never materialized, and by 1939, as World War Two began to engulf Europe, all of the First World War exhibits had been removed, and only a few individual artifacts remained on display.<sup>631</sup>

While the Smithsonian acquired military ephemera from the First World War, the NSCDA started to procure their own collection of women's uniforms, beginning in 1919.<sup>632</sup> Founded in 1891, the NSCDA was a hereditary and patriotic organization of women whose ancestors lived in Colonial America.<sup>633</sup> Much like the other hereditary organizations founded in the late nineteenth-century such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Colonial Dames' membership consisted mostly of middle and upper-class white women.<sup>634</sup> The NSCDA valued the preservation of American heritage, national service, and military commemoration. During the

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<sup>630</sup> In many ways, the Smithsonian was agreeing with what National Museum of American History curator Stephen Lubar argues is the historian's power in creating museum exhibits: to use sources and stories of the past for "commemoration, remembrance, reminiscence, explanation, interpretation, or analysis. Objects move from keepsake to memento to souvenir to reminder to evidence. Our presentations move from celebration to memorial to exhibition." Steven Lubar, "Exhibiting Memories," in *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian*, Amy Henderson and Adrienne L. Kaeppler, eds., (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); 15-27 (quote on 16).

<sup>631</sup> Vining and Hacker, "Displaying the Great War in America: The War Exhibition of the United States National Museum (Smithsonian Institution), 1918 and Beyond, 37-38. Artifacts from the World War Collection remained on display only when included with other items such as in an exhibit of historical American military uniforms.

<sup>632</sup> Uniforms make the women, 2.

<sup>633</sup> Vining and Hacker, "From Camp Follower to Lady in Uniform: Women, Social Class and Military Institutions Before 1920," 369-371; Vining and Hacker, "Uniforms Make the Woman," 1.

<sup>634</sup> The DAR was founded in 1890. Daughters of the American Revolution, "Who We Are," *Daughters of the American Revolution*, n.d., <<http://www.dar.org/national-society/who-we-are>> (25 May 2014); Vining and Hacker, "From Camp Follower to Lady in Uniform", 369-371, Vining and Hacker, "Uniforms Make the Woman," 1; Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of Military Women (c.1815-c.1914)," 157-158.

Spanish-American War in 1898, they supported wartime relief efforts. In 1902, they erected the Spanish-American War Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, a traditional 54-foot tall commemorative column (figure 5.1).<sup>635</sup> Members of the NSCDA once again rallied to the war effort during the Great War and numerous members served in wartime organizations.<sup>636</sup> Many of these women later donated their uniforms and helped form the core of the collection.



Figure 5.1: View of the northwest corner of the Spanish American War Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein. June 9, 2014.

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<sup>635</sup> Vining and Hacker, *Uniforms Make the Woman*, 1-2; “Spanish American War Memorial” Arlington National Cemetery Find a Grave App, <http://public.mapper.army.mil/ANC/ANCWeb/PublicWMV/ancWeb.html> <25 May 2014>.

<sup>636</sup> Vining and Hacker, *Uniforms Make the Woman*, 2.

The NSCDA's uniforms collection represented one example of a much larger trend of canonizing the history and memory of the Great War in museums, especially in Great Britain.<sup>637</sup> In addition to various local museums created in Great Britain, in March 1917, the British War Cabinet established the National War Museum, later renamed the Imperial War Museum (IWM).<sup>638</sup> The IWM endeavored to preserve, collect, and exhibit wartime ephemera and provided a place for veterans to visit and remember their wartime experiences.<sup>639</sup>

Almost from its inception, the IWM formed a women's sub-committee to include the story of British women in the museum's narrative.<sup>640</sup> The committee had two aims: first, to acquire artifacts to exhibit in the IWM, and second, to form a record of the war that showcased the "activities of women by means of a collection of photographs, pamphlets and manuscript reports from all women's organisations and outstanding private individuals."<sup>641</sup> Much like the NSCDA, the committee included women's uniforms in the collection.<sup>642</sup> The committee also created a record of all British women who died because of the war, whether during active service near the

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<sup>637</sup> For an in-depth history of museums and the First World War in Great Britain see: Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994). For wartime museum closures see pages 36-51, for wartime exhibits see pages 65-81.

<sup>638</sup> On British local war museums see: Kavanagh, 103-116. Some proposals for these local museum even envisioned them as also serving as local memorials, 105, 155-157; Imperial War Museum, "History of IWM," *Imperial War Museum*, n.d. <<http://www.iwm.org.uk/corporate/about-IWM>> (4 February 2015). For the history of the Imperial War Museum see Kavanagh pgs 117-151, 171; on the name change from the National War Museum to the Imperial War Museum see Kavanagh, 117. The IWM was later formally established by an Act of Parliament in 1920.

<sup>639</sup> Kavanagh, 126, 129.

<sup>640</sup> Kavanagh, 138; Mary Wilkinson, "Patriotism and Duty: The Women's Work Collection at the Imperial War Museum" *Imperial War Museum Review* 6 (1991): 31-38.

<sup>641</sup> "Subject. Report of the Women's Section of the Imperial War Museum. May 1s, 1917,-February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1918" from the "Report of Imperial War Museum 1917-1918," Folder: EN1/3/GEN/009 Women's Work Committee Report 1917-1918 Imperial War Museum (IWM) Archives, London.

<sup>642</sup> "Women's Work," page 10 of "Report of Imperial War Museum 1918-1919;" Folder: EN1/3/GEN/009 Women's Work Committee Report 1917-1918; IWM Archives, London.

front, in munitions plants, or other circumstances.<sup>643</sup> Extremely active and well-organized from the outset, even before the IWM had a permanent building, the committee organized an exhibition of photographs that depicted women's war work which they exhibited in October 1918 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. This exhibit served as a memorial to the women who died in service and demonstrated the early use of museum exhibits as First World War memorials.<sup>644</sup>

The IWM's Women's Work Committee is significant in terms of its similarities and differences compared to the NSCDA's uniforms collection. Similar to the NSCDA, this committee was composed of prominent women passionate about the preservation and commemoration of women's wartime service. Unlike the NSCDA, the Women's Work Committee was formed as an official part of the IWM from the museum's inception. It received support and sanctioning from the IWM and it was considered an integral part of the museum and its mission. The IWM accessioned any artifacts the Committee acquired into the museum's permanent collection. This was not the case with the NSCDA and their uniforms collection. The NSCDA was an independent organization that developed the idea of the collection on their own and approached the Smithsonian with a request to use their exhibit space. Their collection was not owned by the Smithsonian nor was it part of the Smithsonian's World War collection; it was considered a distinct entity until it was officially donated to the Smithsonian in 1997.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Kavanagh, 138.

<sup>644</sup> Kavanagh, 70.

<sup>645</sup> "Deed of Gift: Appendix," Folder: The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America—1998.0165; Colonial Dames Collection Documents, National Museum of American History Armed Forces History Division (hereafter NMAH).



Despite the importance of women's contributions to the war in both Great Britain and the U.S., the U.S. did not incorporate women into the narrative of the war as easily. This could have been because geography separated the U.S. from the conflict more than in Great Britain, and perhaps made the U.S. feel its effects less strongly. British women had more opportunities to officially join the armed forces than American women through the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Women's Royal Naval Service, and the Women's Royal Air Force. American women were only officially permitted in the Navy and Marine Corps and as Army and Navy nurses.<sup>646</sup>

Regardless of the American failure to establish a national war museum, other Americans founded museums dedicated to the war. Most famously, the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri opened in 1926 and included a museum as part of its memorial complex.<sup>647</sup> The American Red Cross also opened a small museum at their Washington D.C. headquarters in September 1919. Located inside the Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War, the museum served as a memorial dedicated to all ARC workers during the First World War.<sup>648</sup> While the museum presented the entire history of the ARC, many of its exhibits focused on the ARC's work in the recent war, especially women's roles as paid nurses and volunteers.<sup>649</sup> Since women played such a large role in the ARC's wartime work, it is not surprising that the ARC museum privileged women and allotted them space and power in the museum's

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<sup>646</sup> Ewing, 90-94.

<sup>647</sup> Derek Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget: Kansas City's Liberty Memorial*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Kansas City Star Books, 2001), vii, 142.

<sup>648</sup> "The American National Red Cross Museum;" Folder: 140.18 Museum Reports of, Pamphlet, July 1926; Box No. 129; RG 200 National Archives Gift Collection, Records of the American National Red Cross, 1917-1935, 140.18; NACP.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

narrative. Unlike at the Smithsonian's National Museum, women held powerful leadership positions in the ARC, which enabled them to more easily highlight women's wartime service in their exhibits.

*Staking a Claim for Women in the National Museum's Narrative of World War One*

The NSCDA selected member Mrs. Carolyn Benjamin to lead the project to create the uniforms collection.<sup>650</sup> As the wife of Dr. Marcus Mitchell Benjamin, a scientific editor at the Smithsonian's United States National Museum, they considered her to be "especially fitted" for the task.<sup>651</sup> A leader in several organizations, in 1930, Mrs. Benjamin helped the League of Republican Women organize their "School of Politics" to prepare women for participation in political campaigns, an activity which indicated her belief in advancing women's citizenship.<sup>652</sup> Mrs. Benjamin threw herself into the uniforms project and secured as many different uniforms as possible.<sup>653</sup> In 1921 she reported that during the process of obtaining the uniforms, she wrote 820 letters herself. Assisted by the NSCDA's Committee on Relics tasked with helping her, eighty uniforms were ultimately collected and exhibited; one fourth of these were worn and donated by NSCDA members.<sup>654</sup> This enabled the collection to speak to the experiences of women outside of the society.

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<sup>650</sup> "Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned the National Museum, 1919," in "Minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America," pg. 69; Folder: NSCDA Report; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>651</sup> Uniforms make the woman, 1; "Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned the National Museum, 1919," pg. 69.

<sup>652</sup> "G.O.P. "School" for Fair Sex to Start in April," *The Evening Review*, 18 February 1920, page 2 <<http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/59838128/>> [18 June 2014]

<sup>653</sup> "Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned the National Museum, 1919," pg. 69.

<sup>654</sup> "Report of the Committee on Relics, Uniforms of Women Worn During the War, 1921" in "Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America," pg.

The NSCDA dedicated itself to this project because they understood that the war represented a watershed moment of change for American women that needed to be publicly interpreted.<sup>655</sup> Mrs. Benjamin explained that:

while the memory of the splendid deeds of the women can never be forgotten, still it is seldom that the visible evidences of their work are preserved; for they soon fade away and are lost forever. It is therefore not surprising that the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America should have thought it wise to add to their collection of historic relics now on display at the United States National Museum in Washington a series of the uniforms worn by women during the World War.<sup>656</sup>

Mrs. Benjamin's statement, presented to the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention of the Colonial Dames in 1921, demonstrated that the NSCDA recognized the historical importance of uniformed women. They realized that this story, like so many other stories of women's contributions to history, would be lost if they did not take the initiative to preserve its physical evidence.

Though far from exhaustive, the eighty uniforms in the collection demonstrated the diversity of women's wartime activities (figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4).<sup>657</sup> To name just a few, the collection included uniforms from: the Young Women's Christian Association, the American Fund for French Wounded, the Navy Yeoman (F), the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, and more than nine different sections of the American Red Cross.<sup>658</sup> Some uniforms were displayed with photographs or

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71, Folder: NSCDA Report, Colonial Dames Collection Documents, NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>655</sup> "Report of the Committee on Relics, Uniforms of Women Worn During the War, 1921," 73.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid, 73. The NSCDA's Committee on Relics frequently donated artifacts, especially from the colonial period and the American Revolution to the Smithsonian. *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 155.

<sup>657</sup> National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, "Report of the Committee on Relics: Uniforms of Women Worn During the War," (Washington, 1922), 1-2; "Uniforms Make the Woman," 9.

<sup>658</sup> "Report of the Committee on Relics: Uniforms of Women Worn During the War," 17-28.

drawings that depicted how they were actually worn.<sup>659</sup> After she surveyed the contents of the collection, Mrs. Benjamin proudly concluded that:

Some idea may be had of the many philanthropic activities undertaken by the patriotic women of America, and of their great magnitude. All honor then to the splendid services, so generously given, for the amelioration of the suffering conditions of unfortunate humanity, both at home and abroad, brought about by the great World War.<sup>660</sup>

Mrs. Benjamin seemed to recognize that these uniforms demonstrated how the majority of American women's wartime contributions encompassed forms of community service and philanthropic work. Barred from most types of military service, American women incorporated their traditional expertise in community service and relief work into the military apparatus; this enabled them to serve despite gender restrictions and helped their efforts to professionalize these fields.<sup>661</sup> By commemorating how women's wartime services involved community service, the exhibit reminded visitors of women's support of the war effort and demonstrated that their service continued in peace time.

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<sup>659</sup> "Uniforms Make the Woman," 5.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>661</sup> American women had also created voluntary associations in order to serve the country in times of war during the Civil War, and the actions of the women of the First World War can be directly linked to the women of the Civil War. Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of Military Women (c.1815-c.1914)," 146-148.



Figure 5.2: Photograph of a display case from the NSCDA uniform exhibition in the 1920s. From left to right: Uniform of the Motor Division, National League for Women's Service; Uniforms of Captain of the Motor Corps, National League for Women's Service; Uniforms of Major on Staff and Supervisor of Instruction, First National Service School; and Uniforms of the American Friends Service Committee. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Division of Armed Forces History.



Figure 5.3: Photograph of another display case from the NSCDA uniform exhibition in the 1920s. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Division of Armed Forces History.



Figure 5.4: Photograph of another display case from the NSCDA uniform exhibition in the 1920s. Drawings of the uniforms as they were worn appear in between each set of clothing. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Division of Armed Forces History.

The uniforms operated as the physical link to the memory of women's wartime services. Like a battlefield or cemetery, they connected historical events to the present day as *lieux de mémoire*.<sup>662</sup> With the Western Front so far from the U.S., perhaps the NSCDA thought this exhibit could create a pilgrimage site in the U.S., so that Americans could relate to the war and women's roles in it. Mrs. Benjamin elaborated on this further in her 1922 report about the collection. She explained that through the uniforms collection, "some idea may be had of the many philanthropic activities undertaken by the patriotic women of America, and of their great

<sup>662</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," 9.

magnitude.”<sup>663</sup> The uniforms would form a physical link to the past and would educate the public about women’s wartime work.

By staking this claim for women in the historical narrative, the NSCDA honored and commemorated women’s wartime services in a way that was far from traditional, although they may not have realized it at the time. As an alternative to erecting a statuary memorial as they did to commemorate the Spanish American War, the NSCDA used the material culture from women’s service as the memorial objects that commemorated them and preserved their story. The exhibit subtly implied that statues alone were no longer sufficient to commemorate a war as horrible as World War One. These uniforms remembered and celebrated the actual bodies of the women who wore them, as opposed to the idealized, fictional bodies depicted in statuary memorials. This exhibit symbolically rejected the aesthetics of the Madonna della Pietà in favor of an embodiment of real women’s bodies and memories through their clothing.

The uniforms retained the contours of the bodies of the actual women who wore them through a realistic corporeality that rejected the romanticized bodies of statues such as the Pietà and the ARC’s “Spirit of Nursing” memorial. Images of the exhibit’s display cases show the uniforms simply mounted on a wall and possibly stuffed with material to hold their shape, rather than being worn on mannequins or wax figures of fake, unrealistic female forms, although being mounted on the wall gave them a sense of disuse. Like Anna Coleman Ladd’s portrait masks for disfigured soldiers, these uniforms constituted a memorial derived from the bodies of the actual

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<sup>663</sup> “Report of the Committee on Relics: Uniforms of Women Worn During the War,” 16.

people who served in the war. The bodies that experienced war became the canvas for memorial art and helped the viewer internalize the war's memory.<sup>664</sup> By using uniforms as an alternative to statues, the NSCDA helped to change commemoration as it transitioned from being idealistic and lifeless to more realistic and corporeal. Such cultural transitions are messy, partial, and often unnoticed by those involved, as may have been the case with this exhibit. Postwar commemoration did not change completely or all at once; it still included traditional aesthetic influences, as demonstrated by the "Spirit of Nursing" memorial and the Arlington "Nurses Memorial."<sup>665</sup>

Other types of related artifacts were also acquired as part of the uniforms collection. An accession record indicates that a "good cheer bag" became part of the collection.<sup>666</sup> This "good cheer bag" was an example of one of the thousands sent to U.S. troops overseas during Christmas in 1917 and 1918 by the Washington D.C. Women's Section of the Navy League and its 248 other national chapters.<sup>667</sup> These bags contained toiletries and small gifts for deployed service members. The "good

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<sup>664</sup> Perhaps the uniforms exhibit and Ladd's masks were an early version of what Alison Landsberg describes as prosthetic memory—the ability through museums and mass culture to take on a memory that is not one's own. Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, 2-3.

<sup>665</sup> Arlington National Cemetery, "Nurses Memorial," *Arlington National Cemetery: Explorer*, n.d., <<http://public.mapper.army.mil/ANC/ANCWeb/PublicWMV/ancWeb.html>> (5 December 2014). My interpretation here draws on and agrees with Jay Winter's argument that competing "modernist" and "traditional" forms of understanding WWI are no longer useful. Rather, Winter argues for "an overlap of languages and approaches between the old and new, the 'traditional' and the 'modern.'" Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, 3, 2-5.

<sup>666</sup> Accession Record, August 13, 1919, Acc. No. 63960, Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Colonial Dames Collection Documents, NMAH Armed Forces History Division; National Committee on Voluntary Aid of the Women's Section of the Navy League, "Theodorus Bailey Myers Mason House of the Women's Section of the Navy League," *Manual of Voluntary Aid, Second Edition* (Washington D.C.: The National Committee on Voluntary Aid, 1916); 108-113.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid; Report on the Committee of Relics, 1992 pg. 16. This particular "good cheer bag" was donated by Mrs. Julian James of Washington D.C., the honorary Vice-President of the section. Report on the Committee of Relics, 1992 pg. 16; *Manual of Voluntary Aid, Second Edition*, pg. 108.



cheer bag” acquired for this collection represented an example of American women’s service work on the home front. The addition of the “good cheer bag” in the collection alongside the uniforms included the story of the American women who served on the home front but did not wear a uniform. Additionally, a Women’s Overseas Service League lapel ribbon was included with an American Friends Service Committee uniform, perhaps because the donor thought a symbol of her postwar commitment to national service through the WOSL should be presented alongside her wartime uniforms (figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5: The Women’s Overseas Service League ribbon included with an American Friends Service Committee uniform at the National Museum of American History, Washington D.C. September 3, 2014. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

Interspersed among the display cases of predominantly masculine military artifacts in the Smithsonian's World War collection, the women's uniforms, many of which represented feminine vocations such as nursing, may have reinforced the notion that women's involvement with the military should be restricted to jobs related to their traditional gender roles as mothers and caregivers. It is unclear whether the NSCDA desired this message to be sent, or whether they intended the exhibit to push for women's inclusion in more traditionally male wartime jobs. Their silence on this topic does not mean that they were apathetic to these issues.<sup>668</sup> Female veteranist-commemorators did not always agree with each other and they may have been divided about this and other issues.

Mrs. Benjamin had little trouble finding enough women willing to donate their uniforms to the collection, and she received positive responses from many potential donors. These women considered it an honor to donate their uniforms and they understood that their donation helped commemorate their wartime service. In 1921, Mrs. Florence A. Smith wrote to Mrs. Benjamin to confirm her donation of the Y.M.C.A uniform she wore at U.S. Government Hospital No. 27 in Parkview, Pennsylvania, as the chairman of the Y.M.C.A. Committee of the Western District of France.<sup>669</sup> She enthusiastically told Mrs. Benjamin that her "report was so interesting that it inspired many of us with a desire to help in any way that we could."<sup>670</sup> Mrs.

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<sup>668</sup> For more on meaning of the silence in historical memory see: Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*.

<sup>669</sup> Letter, Mrs. Florence A. Smith to Mrs. Benjamin, June 7, 1921, Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674, Colonial Dames Collection Documents, NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

Smith recognized that her donation would not only aid the NSCDA, but also commemorate her wartime work.

Through their philanthropic donations, women like Mrs. Smith helped the community of women veterans. By donating their uniforms, she and the other donors supported the commemoration of women's wartime roles, if only briefly. Their donations helped combat the amnesia that could result in the nation's tendency to forget women's wartime contributions. These donors wanted their wartime services to be remembered and recognized not just for themselves, but also for future generations of American women who yearned to serve their country.

Even the federal government agreed to donate women's uniforms to display in the National Museum. General Orders from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy directed the donation of uniforms worn by women in the Navy and the Marine Corps directly to the Smithsonian, not the NSCDA (figures 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8).<sup>671</sup> These General Orders demonstrated that the War Department and the Navy recognized the historical importance of these first enlisted women and wanted their history to be recorded in the National Museum. Even though the Navy and Marines allowed women to enlist only as an emergency wartime measure and forced them to be discharged by 1920, they still somewhat valued these women and wanted to bestow upon them some commemorative honors and help preserve their historical legacy.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Letter, Mr. Ravenel to Mrs. Benjamin, March 29, 1919, Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc. #65054; Colonial Dames Collection Documents, NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>672</sup> Ebbert and Hall, *The First, the Few, the Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*, 15, 93-95.

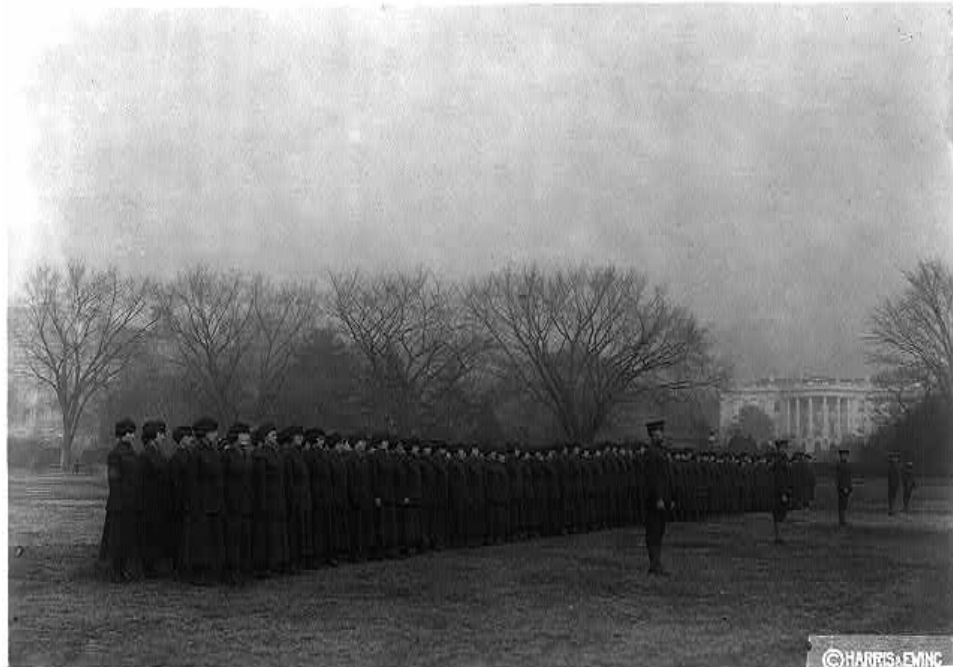


Figure 5.6: “Marinettes” on White House Lawn,” c. 1919. Library of Congress.



Figure 5.7: “Navy Yeoman (F) in white summer dress uniform,” c. 1916-1919 (most likely 1919). Library of Congress.



Figure 5.8: “Yeoman (F). Navy Department: Inspection,” 1919. Library of Congress.

The Navy’s support can be understood as another example of the temporary place accorded to women in military affairs and commemoration. The Navy wanted women to enlist when they needed them during the war, but they pushed them out of service afterwards. They wanted to commemorate women, but they did not want them to be a permanent part of the Navy and Marine Corps. Like the Gold Star pilgrimages and its temporary rest houses, women were only allotted a fleeting place in the official American commemorative narrative of the war at the National Museum.

As Mrs. Benjamin established the collection, it did not come together without its share of challenges and disagreements. While working with Mrs. Benjamin and the NSCDA, Smithsonian officials tried to ensure that the collection and its exhibition met their display standards. These professional standards did not include the use of department store style wax figures to display clothing. This became an issue when the Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania donated uniforms with wax figures which they

requested the uniforms to be displayed upon.<sup>673</sup> The curator of history, Mr. Theodore Belote, and Mr. Ravenel, an administrative assistant to Smithsonian Secretary Charles D. Walcott, refused to comply. They had experimented with such wax figures in previous exhibitions and Mr. Ravenel believed they were “not suited for museum purposes.” Mr. Belote asserted that they would “appear very much out of place with all the other historical exhibits.”<sup>674</sup> Ironically, in rejecting the use of the wax figures, Belote and Ravenel unintentionally helped make the exhibit even more distinct from the idealized bodies of most female statues.

Mr. Belote also expressed his criticisms and doubts about the collection and demonstrated his underlying prejudices about including women in the story of the World War. He wrote to Mr. Ravenel that he “should deeply regret any action which might in any way, shape, or form bring ridicule or depreciation upon the War Collection,” referring to his distaste for the wax figures and his fears that they may decrease the professionalism of the exhibits.<sup>675</sup> He also discussed the uniforms collection itself, stating that:

Of course, it is clearly understood that the women of the country contributed very greatly to the winning of the war, but there is a decided feeling in many quarters that the uniforms now being assembled by Mrs. Benjamin represent more the personal ideas of the prominent individuals who wore them, rather than essential service to the Government during this trying period. In view of these facts I feel that every effort should be made to make this particular

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<sup>673</sup> Letter, Mr. Warburton to Mr. Ravenel, January 20, 1920, Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. # 65054, Colonial Dames Collection Documents, NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>674</sup> Letter, Mr. Ravenel to Mrs. Benjamin, January 17, 1920, Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. # 65054, Colonial Dames Collection Documents, NMAH Armed Forces History Division; Letter from Curator to Mr. Ravenel, January 10, 1920; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. # 65054; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division; “Uniforms Make the Woman”, 2.

<sup>675</sup> Letter, Curator to Mr. Ravenel, January 10, 1920; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. # 65054.

Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

collection as dignified a one as possible and that special care should be taken to eliminate anything which might in any way be considered not in harmony with the serious character of the exhibition.<sup>676</sup>

Despite his support for this project, Mr. Belote's letter revealed his private hesitations about it. Although he believed women were important to the war effort and deserved a place in the museum, he doubted whether the NSCDA's collection actually showcased women's contributions or whether it just celebrated the wealthy, elite women of the NSCDA. His class bias against the NSCDA, though not unfounded, caused him to devalue the wartime contributions of its members and other women. He doubted whether their services were actually "essential" to the war effort and the government.<sup>677</sup> He wanted to vet and supervise the exhibit to make sure it was professional and historically significant enough for the National Museum. This incident demonstrates his gender and class biases against the NSCDA. Even as the NSCDA created this collection to stake a claim for women in the history and memory of the war, the men who supposedly supported their project quietly challenged its underlying purpose.

Mrs. Benjamin seemed to recognize that these biases existed and she tried to combat their effects. In dealing with the issue of the wax figures, she wrote Mr.

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid.

<sup>677</sup> Belote seems to have exhibited a pattern of claiming that he wanted underrepresented groups included in the Smithsonian's collections but acting differently and using space limitations as justification for their exclusion. For example, when the daughter of Sergeant Christian Fleetwood, an African-American soldier who won the Medal of Honor in the Civil War, offered the medal to the National Museum in 1947, Belote objected to the accessioning of the artifact. He claimed to support the inclusion of African-American military objects in the collection but said they lacked storage and display space, a claim that scholar Richard Kurin disputes as false. Kurin argues that Belote was more concerned about the political message displaying the artifact might have sent. Richard Kurin, *The Smithsonian's History of American in 101 Objects* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), 228-229. However, Belote did accept the suffragist collections of Carrie Chapman Catt and Susan B. Anthony. Bird, 41.

Ravenel about her fears that the uniforms from the Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania would not be included in the collection because of this miscommunication.<sup>678</sup> She believed this would be a great loss to the collection because these uniforms “properly belong in the exhibit, if it is to be an historic one; which is the aim and purpose of our Society.”<sup>679</sup> Mrs. Benjamin’s emphasis on the exhibit’s historical purpose and the Society’s historical intentions—she even underlined the word “historic”—demonstrated that she knew she had to vouch for the collection’s historical legitimacy. She must have recognized some of the doubts of the Smithsonian staff; perhaps she even heard about these concerns through her husband. She felt she needed to justify the collection’s mission and prove that it should be taken seriously and included in the National Museum.

Despite the undertones of sexism in Mr. Belote’s letter, some of his suspicions about the motives of the “prominent individuals” involved with the NSCDA deserve consideration. Not all of the uniforms in the collection were worn by members of the NSCDA, but as the organizers of the collection, the NSCDA had control over who was contacted to donate their uniform and whose donations were accepted. This meant that the class and race biases of the NSCDA affected the collection. Mr. Belote may not have been that far off when he insinuated that many of the uniforms in the collection represented prominent individuals of the same upper and middle-class backgrounds as NSCDA members. It was to these women’s advantage to present a narrative that showed wealthy, white American women who selflessly served their

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<sup>678</sup> Letter, Mrs. Benjamin to Mr. Ravenel, January 11, 1920; National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. #65054; Colonial Dames Collection Documents NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.



country. In reality, most women who served in uniform, especially those who went overseas, were actually from working-class backgrounds.<sup>680</sup> This class bias from NSCDA members was not completely overwhelming, though, since the collection contained uniforms worn by groups composed of women from a variety of backgrounds, including the YMCA, YWCA, and canteen workers who mostly came from the working class.<sup>681</sup> Even so, some examples of these uniforms were donated by socially prominent members of the NSCDA such as the YWCA Canteen Worker's uniform donated by Miss Virginia Armistead Nelson, a member from the Tennessee Society who was also a WOSL member.<sup>682</sup>

Diversity in terms of race, ethnicity and religion could only ever be partially achieved in the collection because of the exclusivity in the recruitment of uniformed women during the war.<sup>683</sup> Wartime policies deliberately excluded African-American women from almost all uniformed service opportunities. Jewish women and recent immigrants were also discouraged, and although some African-American and Jewish women served in uniform, most wartime organizations believed that the ideal woman for uniformed service was white, Christian, and native-born.<sup>684</sup> The collection included a uniform from the Jewish Welfare Board but none that represented any of the few uniformed African-American women. The collection also completely excluded the story of African-American women's non-uniformed wartime service.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> "Report on the Committee on Relics," 2; Zeiger, 31, 40.

<sup>681</sup> "Report on the Committee on Relics"; Zeiger, 39-41.

<sup>682</sup> "Report on the Committee on Relics", 11.

<sup>683</sup> Zeiger, 27-28. Virginia Armistead Nelson's name appears in several membership rosters of the WOSL. Box 1922-1932 and Box: 1933-1939, Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>684</sup> Zeiger, 27.

<sup>685</sup> Report on the Committee on Relics," 12, 24.

Overall, the biases of the collection portrayed a complicated message that Mr. Belote picked up on. While the NSCDA certainly attempted to make the collection inclusive in terms of the wartime organizations that women joined, the realities of women's wartime service, and the NSCDA's possible motives for self-advancement, resulted in a collection that retained these biases and served the needs of the NSCDA members first, even as they tried to include American women in the historical narrative of the war.

*Denied Display: The Temporary Inclusion of the NSCDA Uniforms Collection in the Smithsonian's United States National Museum*

By 1920, the collections in the Division of History at the Smithsonian's United States National Museum had expanded so much with the World War collection that space was limited and officials wanted a new building just to house the history collection.<sup>686</sup> But without any prospects for a new building, in 1929 the Division of History rearranged its exhibitions to present a more coherent narrative of American history.<sup>687</sup> This rearrangement moved most of the World War collection out of the Natural History Building and into the Arts and Industries Building.<sup>688</sup> During this rearrangement, curators had to decide which parts of the collections were important enough to remain on display in the limited space that remained. Thus, in 1929, eleven years after the Armistice and ten years before the almost complete elimination of the

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<sup>686</sup> Walker, 42.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

World War exhibits, the Smithsonian removed the Colonial Dames uniforms collection from public display. In fact, the Smithsonian had previously asked the NSCDA to stop collecting material since there was no longer room to display the garments and the collection had outgrown its allotted cases.<sup>689</sup>

Mr. Belote wrote to Mr. Ravenel and suggested that they alert the NSCDA of this change and ask whether they would like the collection returned or placed in storage.<sup>690</sup> In this letter, Mr. Belote justified the removal of the uniforms and exposed his biases against the historical importance of these garments. He wrote that “the costumes to which I refer above are not of primary historical or scientific interest and the space which they now occupy is urgently needed for the accommodation of material of very much greater value which is to be removed from the Natural History Building and installed in this building.”<sup>691</sup> The choice to relocate the exhibits of First World War artifacts meant there was no longer room to display the uniforms, although it is not clear what material was considered to be more valuable than the uniforms.

In this frank letter, Mr. Belote revealed that he did not consider women’s uniforms to be artifacts of primary historical importance worthy enough to be exhibited in the limited space allotted to the Division of History. Whether he held this opinion because the war remained a recent memory, because he did not value

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<sup>689</sup> Letter, Mr. Belote to Mr. Ravenel, March 9, 1929; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #65054; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division; “Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned the National Museum,” 1927.

<sup>690</sup> Letter, Mr. Belote to Mr. Ravenel, March 9, 1929. For more on Belote’s work with the National Museum’s historical collections see: William L. Bird, Jr., *Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes, and Curios from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2013), 40-42.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

women's roles in the war, or because growing isolationist and pacifist sentiments in the U.S. discouraged a display of women's militarism, he did not say.<sup>692</sup> Although Mr. Ravenel had previously expressed his regret to the NSCDA about the necessity of taking down the exhibits, he too agreed with Mr. Belote and considered the reorganization of the exhibition space to be a higher priority.<sup>693</sup> Mr. Belote's attitude rejected the conception of the exhibit as a memorial that commemorated women's wartime services since he did not validate the importance of its public display.

The removal of the women's uniforms from public exhibition did not go unnoticed by the women who donated their belongings to the collection. The donors' reactions to the collection's removal revealed the commemorative mission that these women and the NSCDA believed the exhibit could accomplish. Although they did not always explicitly refer to the collection as a memorial, NSCDA President Theresa M.N. Hutchinson described it as a memorial when she dealt with a request from one of the women who complained about its removal. Like several other donors, Mrs. John B. Hammond visited the National Museum in 1936 or 1937 and became upset when she discovered that the entire collection had been taken down. As she looked into the issue, she also learned that contrary to her understanding, the NSCDA owned

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<sup>692</sup> For a further discussion of isolationism in the 1920s and 1930s see chapter six. See also: Daniela Rossini, "Isolationism and Internationalism in Perspective: Myths and Reality in American Foreign Policy," in *From Theodore Roosevelt to FDR: Internationalism and Isolationism in American Foreign Policy*, Edited by Daniela Rossini (Staffordshire, England: Ryburn Publishing, Keele University Press, 1995); 11-23, 113; Leroy N. Rieselbach, *The Roots of Isolationism: Congressional Voting and Presidential Leadership in Foreign Policy* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), 3, 9-13; John E. Wiltz, *From Isolationism to War, 1931-1941* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968); Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966); Ronald E. Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance: American Isolationism, Internationalism, and Europe, 1901-1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991).

<sup>693</sup> Letter, Mr. Ravenel to Mrs. Frazer, March 13, 1929; Folder: ACC #65054; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

the collection and not the Smithsonian. In March 1937, she wrote to Dr. Wetmore, the director of the National Museum, and requested that he contact the NSCDA and ask that her items be returned to her.<sup>694</sup>

The issue of Mrs. Hammond's donation had already come to the attention of the NSCDA in 1936. In a letter to Mrs. Benjamin that discussed Mrs. Hammond's situation, Mrs. Hutchinson expressed her admiration of Mrs. Benjamin's work establishing the collection, which she believed to be "a very valuable historical possession always, as it is now."<sup>695</sup> Mrs. Hutchinson explained to Mrs. Benjamin that she could not authorize her to return Mrs. Hammond's items, or any part of the collection, since these items were now the property of the NSCDA.<sup>696</sup> Specifically, Mrs. Hutchinson thought that returning individual items from the collection would be detrimental to the collection as a whole. She believed that each part of the collection "is of value, showing the effect of the uniforms, the hat, etc., while worn by the person to whom it belonged. I feel that the photograph showing the whole effect of the uniform is important."<sup>697</sup> She valued the collection in its fully assembled state and believed it would lose historical value if individual items were removed. She wanted the story of uniformed women to be comprehensively depicted and contextualized by using the artifacts of the women who actually wore the uniforms on display.

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<sup>694</sup> Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Secretaries of the Smithsonian," *Smithsonian History*, n.d. <<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/secretaries-smithsonian>> (7 December 2014);

Smithsonian Institution Archives, "Alexander Wetmore," *Smithsonian History*, n.d. <<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/alexander-wetmore>> (7 December 2014).

<sup>695</sup> Letter, Mrs. Hutchinson to Mrs. Benjamin, June 16, 1936; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.

Mrs. Hutchinson tried to appease Mrs. Hammond and expressed the NSCDA's appreciation of her donation. She explained that "Mrs. Hammond's name would always be attached to the uniform and kept in our archives," which would ensure that her contribution would remain connected to her name and tell the story of her wartime experience.<sup>698</sup> Here, Mrs. Hutchinson explicitly described the NSCDA's intention that collection serve as a monument to women's wartime service. "The gift," Mrs. Hutchinson wrote, "is a permanent memorial to her [Mrs. Hammond's] generosity and her war service, and is much safer in our hands than in those of a private person. Though, of course, she may not realize that."<sup>699</sup>

Mrs. Hutchinson expressed the Society's intentions, perhaps unarticulated or understated until this time, that the uniforms collection would serve as a permanent memorial to the uniformed women who served during World War One. Rather than erecting a grand monument like their Spanish-American War Monument in their honor, the NSCDA commemorated these women through the clothing they actually wore during the conflict. As a utilitarian memorial, this collection served a dual purpose. First, it commemorated women's service, and second, it helped include these women's wartime experiences in the historical and commemorative narrative of the war. By using artifacts as a physical memorial, the uniforms collection provided proof of women's wartime services. As part of the collection, the individual uniforms and other relics would be protected and preserved in perpetuity. The collection would

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<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid.

help ensure that the stories of the women associated with these objects would not be completely lost, as they might have been if they remained in private hands.

When she said that Mrs. Hammond might not realize how much safer her items would be as part of the collection, Mrs. Hutchinson recognized the abstractness of this form of memorial, the purpose of which might not be clearly understood and recognized by everyone. Although the uniforms collection did not outwardly proclaim its status as a memorial, that did not negate its memorial function or the NSCDA's intention that would serve as a memorial. Much like other type of veteranist-commemorations performed by women during the interwar period, this memorial rejected traditional bricks and mortar monuments in favor of a more subtle, useful, and performative multi-purpose type of commemoration.

Mrs. Hammond complained so persistently about the situation with her uniform because she understood its importance to preserving the legacy of women's service in World War One. In her letters to Dr. Wetmore that asked for the return of her uniform if it was not displayed, she used the uniform's importance as justification for her request and her disdain that it had not been donated to the National Museum. She begged Dr. Wetmore to assist her in reclaiming her uniform from the NSCDA. She told him: "I do so want it back. My uniform at present is in storage in the Division of History and might as well be stored in my own trunk."<sup>700</sup> Frustrated with the situation, Mrs. Hammond did not see the value in her precious belongings remaining

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<sup>700</sup> Letter, Mrs. John B. Hammond to Dr. Wetmore, March 15, 1937; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

in storage, unable to be seen by the public. If the items were not a part of the National Museum's collection as she intended, she preferred to retain them herself.

Mrs. Hammond did not value the NSCDA and their authority over the collection. She viewed the respected National Museum as the only legitimate home for her items if she herself could not have them. She explained to Dr. Wetmore that, "as you know, enlisting women in the Naval Reserve may never occur again in our history and it does seem such a shame the national collections will be minus these specimens."<sup>701</sup> Mrs. Hammond understood and appreciated the value of her uniform and artifacts just as much as the NSCDA. Unlike the NSCDA, who thought this made it critical for their organization to keep the items, Mrs. Hammond preferred the prestigious National Museum to retain and care for her donations. Despite this difference in opinion, Mrs. Hammond and the NSCDA agreed on one fundamental premise: the uniforms worn by American women during the war, in particular this Yeoman (F) uniform, were essential to preserving the story of these women's experiences

In pointing out that enlisting women in the Naval Reserve might not happen again in U.S. history, Mrs. Hammond recognized the importance of women's first brief foray into official enlisted uniformed military service. She understood the significance of this event for American women's roles as citizens and their struggles for greater independence and equality. She also understood this event to be an aberration necessitated by the war. She realized that the U.S. government might not need to enlist women in the Naval Reserve again. Without the extenuating circumstances of a global, mechanized war that required large amounts of labor,

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<sup>701</sup> Ibid.



American women might not be given another chance to prove their mettle in official military service. Little did she know that in just a few years, another global war would begin, and once again American women would be called to serve in uniform, although this time the timidity of the First World War would be somewhat improved with the creation of the WAVEs and the WAACs.

Mrs. Hammond predicated the preservation of the memory of her service on the condition that her uniform must be owned and exhibited by the National Museum. If her uniform remained in storage, Mrs. Hammond believed that her donation stopped serving its purpose. She thought it lost value if the NSCDA owned it and not the National Museum. She recognized that the history of the Yeoman (F) could easily be forgotten and she believed that exhibiting her uniform and ceding it to the National Museum could act as an antidote to that amnesia. Mrs. Hammond's dissent demonstrates yet again that female veteranist-commemorators did not unanimously agree about the best way to commemorate their service.

To a non-museum professional, storing such a valuable artifact could be seen as a waste, but Mrs. Hammond misunderstood what the Colonial Dames correctly perceived: just by collecting the uniforms as part of a museum collection, the history of uniformed women's service could be preserved for the long term. Keeping the uniforms in an official museum collection, whether owned by the NSCDA or the National Museum, preserved and cared for them under contemporary museum standards. They gained a special status as historical artifacts and by remaining in storage they survived to teach later generations of Americans about their history.

Mrs. Hammond was not the only donor to react so negatively to the removal of the collection from display. After hearing from her brother, who visited the Smithsonian in the fall of 1930, that her uniform from the American Fund for French Wounded was no longer exhibited, in February 1931, WOSL member Lucy K. Shaffer wrote to the museum and requested its return.<sup>702</sup> She explained that if it was no longer on view, she “should like to have my uniform back, to keep as a souvenir.”<sup>703</sup> In response to her request, Mr. Ravenel explained that only the NSCDA had the authority to return items in the collection to their donors.<sup>704</sup> In an attempt to justify the removal of the collection from exhibition, Ravenel told her how, “owing to necessary changes in the Museum’s exhibit due to our greatly crowded condition, it was necessary to remove this collection and place it in storage.”<sup>705</sup> Like Mrs. Hammond, Lucy Shaffer seemed disappointed that her uniform had been removed. From her perspective, having her uniform back as a souvenir might at least allow her to commemorate her service in her own way, as opposed to having the proof of her wartime experiences locked in storage.

Unable to assist the donors in retrieving their uniforms because they were the property of the NSCDA, Smithsonian officials asked the NSCDA to reclaim the collection. In March 1937, after the Mrs. Hammond debacle, the curator, Mr. Belote,

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<sup>702</sup> Shaffer’s name appears in several membership rosters of the WOSL. Box 1922-1932 and Box: 1933-1939, Women’s Overseas Service League (WOSL) *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>703</sup> Letter from Lucy K. Shaffer to the Smithsonian, February 21, 1931; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>704</sup> Letter from Ravenel to Lucy K. Shaffer, March 11, 1931; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division; Letter, Charles Carey to Mr. Belote, December 31, 1942; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>705</sup> Letter from Ravenel to Lucy K. Shaffer, March 11, 1931.

wrote to Dr. Wetmore about the status of the uniforms collection. The uniforms had been in storage since the World War collection had been transferred from the Natural History Building to the Arts and Industries Building.<sup>706</sup> He expressed his concerns that:

objects of this type deteriorate rapidly in storage regardless of the care that may be given them and these uniforms will, if left in storage for a few years longer, inevitably deteriorate to a marked degree. I think that the attention of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America should be called to this fact and that the Society should be asked to relieve the National Museum of any further responsibility for the preservation of this material.”<sup>707</sup>

Mr. Belote did somewhat value the uniforms collection and he worried about its condition. But he also realized that as long as the National Museum retained the collection, it remained uncomfortably accountable. The museum could not return the artifacts to donors since it did not own them, nor could they display the collection or guarantee its safety in storage. It seemed best to ask the NSCDA to repossess the collection and take charge of its long-term care.

Dr. Wetmore agreed with Mr. Belote and wrote to the NSCDA on April 19, 1937 to ask them to consider removing the collection from the Smithsonian and storing it themselves. Dr. Wetmore explained that the Smithsonian felt that “with museum facilities that have been arranged recently in connection with your work you may wish to have the material shown where it can be enjoyed by the public. I am moved to make this suggestion in part by the fact that there has been request[s] on several occasions recently for the withdrawal of part of this material by the original

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<sup>706</sup> Letter from Belote to Wetmore, March 17, 1937; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

owners. This puts the National Museum in a somewhat difficult position.”<sup>708</sup>

Although Dr. Wetmore wrote the letter to extricate the National Museum from the awkward situations with Mrs. Hammond and Lucy Shaffer, Dr. Wetmore, like Mr. Belote, also seemed concerned about the collection’s condition, despite their underlying doubts about its importance.

Although women’s uniforms had been allotted exhibition space in the museum for nine years, and although these Smithsonian officials professed to care about the collection’s safety and public display, the collection was still not considered important enough to constitute a permanent exhibition as the NSCDA had intended. The Smithsonian only temporarily displayed the uniforms to supplement their larger collection of masculine wartime artifacts. That the Smithsonian itself did not collect the uniforms or seek them out indicated that the Smithsonian’s male leadership did not originally envision women’s uniforms to be such an important part of the permanent collection they acquired for the proposed national war museum. Rather, the uniforms had to be obtained by a women’s organization to become a museum collection. Again, women were only temporarily given space in the commemorative and historical narrative of the war. Female groups like the NSCDA had to fight for women’s inclusion in the war’s history, but they only achieved partial success. Ultimately, like the Gold Star pilgrimage rest houses, the exhibition was taken down and the memory of women’s roles in the war and its commemoration receded from public memory.

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<sup>708</sup> Letter Dr. Wetmore to Mrs. Harry Horton Benkard, April 19, 1937; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames, Acc, #66674; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

The NSCDA eventually took the Smithsonian up on their offer to pack the collection in moth-proof cases and store it more safely until the NSCDA could figure out what to do with it.<sup>709</sup> In 1931, the NSCDA Committee on Relics began working on the issue. They contemplated the complicated process it would entail to move the uniforms, since each donor would have to be contacted for their permission, and they decided to leave the uniforms at the National Museum until a final decision could be reached.<sup>710</sup> In the 1931 report of the Committee on Relics, the new chairman, Elizabeth Van Rensselaer Frazer, discussed the uniforms and explained that “their value being more sentimental than intrinsic, they would probably be fairly safe at Bellevue because they would not be so liable to theft as the valuable heirlooms that are now down in the museum.”<sup>711</sup> Despite her concern for the collection’s safety, Frazer seemed to value the collection’s historical purpose less than her predecessors on the committee, as evidenced by how she called its value “sentimental.” Frazer took over the committee in 1927 from Mrs. Benjamin after the collection’s completion.<sup>712</sup> During the war, Frazer served as the chairman of the Women’s Committee of the Navy League and supported sailors through service work on the home front, such as

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<sup>709</sup> Minutes of the Nineteenth Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, “Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned to the National Museum, 1929”; Folder: NSCDA Report; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>710</sup> Minutes of the Twentieth Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, “Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned to the National Museum, 1931; Folder: NSCDA Report; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid. Bellevue is the old name for Dumbarton House, the NSCDA’s headquarters in Washington D.C. A restored Federal era mansion, the NSCDA has operated it as a museum since 1932. “NSCDA, “Dumbarton House, Chronology,” *Dumbarton House*, n.d. <<http://dumbartonhouse.org/residents>> (7 December 2014).

<sup>712</sup> Minutes of the Eighteenth Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, “Report of the Committee on Relics Loaned to the National Museum,” 1927.

the “good cheer bags.”<sup>713</sup> She later served as the chairman and founder of the Belleau Wood Memorial Association, which sought to rebuild the French village of Belleau and construct a memorial to the Americans who fought there, a hybrid form of veteranist-commemoration that involved community service and historic preservation.<sup>714</sup> Because of her background, Mrs. Frazer probably understood and appreciated the collection’s memorial purpose and importance. Yet she still seems to have undervalued its importance as historical evidence of women’s wartime roles and its function as a memorial. As time passed since the war, it seemed that even some female veteranist-commemorators lost sight of the collection’s importance and memorial functions.

The matter of the collection’s future was soon taken up again by Mrs. Benjamin, at the urging of Mrs. Hutchinson.<sup>715</sup> In 1939, Mrs. Benjamin admitted that the uniforms had been “exhibited in a very prominent aisle for twelve years or more. Museums do not keep their exhibits static; changes must be made to allow space for the continuous showing of new deposits.”<sup>716</sup> Mrs. Benjamin felt that despite their intentions for a permanent display, the exhibit had been a success, especially since Dr. Wetmore emphasized to her that “because the exhibit was a very historical one” the museum would gladly accept it as a donation.<sup>717</sup> But, acquiescing to Mrs.

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<sup>713</sup> “Funeral Rites Held for Mrs. Frazer,” *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), September 24, 1949, B2, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid; “Plans to Rebuild Belleau,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 5, 1922, 9, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; “Foch Aids American Belleau Wood Plan,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), October 17, 1921, 5, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>715</sup> Minutes of the Twenty-Fourth Biennial Conference of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, “Report on the Exhibiting of a Collection of Uniforms of Women, Worn in the World War, 1914-1918,” 1939, pg. 42-32; Folder: NSCDA Report; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid, 66.

Hutchinson's request to find the uniforms a "worthy" home where they would be displayed, Mrs. Benjamin investigated other alternatives.<sup>718</sup> She considered all sorts of options such as the Fort Ticonderoga Museum, the War Department's displays at upcoming expositions, and the recently completed War Memorial Museum at the Indiana War Memorial.<sup>719</sup> She received some encouragement from these institutions, such as from the leader of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum who urged her not to relinquish the uniforms or separate the collection because, owing to their great historic value, they would grow in interest and value as the years passed.<sup>720</sup> A Colonel from the War Department wanted to display the uniforms alongside the War Department's displays at expositions in San Francisco and New York, but to his disappointment the officials in charge of the expositions would not grant him the extra space.<sup>721</sup> Despite these instances of encouragement, Mrs. Benjamin had trouble getting definite responses from the forty-one letters she mailed in her quest to find a museum to exhibit the uniforms.<sup>722</sup> It is significant that Mrs. Benjamin agreed to return to this difficult project and try to find the collection a suitable home. Unlike Frazer, she still saw great value in the collection and understood that its historical and memorial purpose was undermined when it was not accessible to the public.

In spite of her best efforts, Mrs. Benjamin did not succeed in finding a place to display the uniforms and they remained in storage. Her failure to secure a new home for the collection does not represent a failure on her part. Rather, these

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid, 66-68.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid 66-67.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid. 66.

institutions failed to recognize the value of the collection and denied women a stable place in the public narrative of the war. Now that time had passed since the war, their story no longer resonated in U.S. society, and it would not resonate again until the Second World War.

*Conclusion: The Second World War and the Legacy of the NSCDA Uniforms Collection*

Despite the setbacks she encountered while trying to find another place to exhibit the collection, Mrs. Benjamin did not abandon her efforts, although it became increasingly difficult as war broke out in Europe again. In 1941, she reported to the NSCDA that while she continued to look for a place for the collection, “the uncertainty of world affairs” in Europe had “tended to make the heads of all institutions such as libraries, art galleries, museums, etc., careful about assuming responsibility by accepting the trust.”<sup>723</sup> In fact, she explained how Mabel Boardman of the ARC probably would have accepted the collection for the Red Cross Museum, but due to the preparations for the U.S.’s possible entrance into the war, every space at the ARC Headquarters, which included the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, had been turned over to war relief work.<sup>724</sup> But Mrs. Benjamin also saw another side to the current situation and she explained to the council that, “should we be drawn into the European war, the National Society would probably wish to

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<sup>723</sup> Minutes of the Twenty-Fifth Biennial Council of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, “Report on the Collections of Uniforms of Women Worn During the Great War, 1914-1918,” 59-60; Folder: NSCDA Report; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid, 60.



supplement at its close, the present complete collection with another, which would probably be of an entirely *new* type, after a lapse of twenty-five years.”<sup>725</sup>

Mrs. Benjamin realized that with war brewing, a new generation of American women might be put into uniformed service. Until this point, the uniforms collection had been unique in that World War One was the first time that large numbers of American women had performed uniformed wartime service.<sup>726</sup> Another war might continue that trend and create the need to celebrate the first generation of women in uniform alongside the new generation. She understood that times had changed and that these women would be quite different, but nonetheless she was already thinking of ways to maintain a place for the women of the First World War in the historical narrative and to include the women of the Second World War in their ranks. Although this expansion of the uniform collection did not happen, Mrs. Benjamin’s musings were quite similar to those of the WOSL and the American War Mothers, who eventually allowed World War Two women into their organizations.

Mrs. Benjamin also correctly understood the value of the collection to the U.S. once the nation entered the Second World War. In 1942, *The Saturday Evening Post* contacted Dr. Wetmore and asked for access to the uniforms collection.<sup>727</sup> *The Saturday Evening Post* intended to publish a four-page color spread about women’s uniforms in both World Wars to help the War Department’s recruiting efforts.<sup>728</sup> The War Department supplied the paper with examples of current women’s uniforms, but

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>726</sup> *A Companion to Women’s Military History*, 2.

<sup>727</sup> Letter, R.F. Garland to Dr. Wetmore, December 12, 1942; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. #63960; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

they had not been able to find complete uniforms from the First World War.<sup>729</sup> With the Colonial Dames' permission, they sent fashion historian Mrs. Helen Virginia Meyer to the Smithsonian to study the uniforms. They used her sketches alongside drawings of women's World War Two uniforms for an original color spread and materials used for a Treasury Department War Bond Drive (figure 5.9).<sup>730</sup>



Figure 5.9: The “Women of Two Wars” article that appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Illustrations by Helen Virginia Meyer and photographs by Elliot Clarke. *The Saturday Evening Post* 215, no. 48 (May, 1943):26-27. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed March 6, 2015). Copyright The Saturday Evening Post and the Benjamin Franklin Literary & Medical Society.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> Letter, Mr. R.F. Garland to Dr. Wetmore, December 23, 1942; Folder: National Society of Colonial Dames Acc. #63960; Colonial Dames Collection Documents; NMAH Armed Forces History Division; “Women of Two War,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 215, no. 48 (May, 1943):26-27. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed March 6, 2015).

This incident demonstrated that the NSCDA collection succeeded in at least one of its goals: the preservation of women's First World War uniforms for historical purposes. That *The Saturday Evening Post* had trouble securing complete uniforms indicated that by 1942, these uniforms were scarce and probably not well preserved. The use of these uniforms alongside World War Two uniforms as part of an appeal to help the war effort also held great significance. The *Post* viewed the women of the current war as connected to the women of the last war. They recognized that they inherited their legacy and built off of their advances, a sentiment expressed by many female veteranist-commemorators. Additionally, the use of women's images to help raise funds for war bonds and to recruit more uniformed women indicated that women's wartime contributions were desired and valued. Women needed to do their bit, and they were recognized as a demographic that must be reached to advance U.S. war aims. Even though women were not granted the same rights to serve as men, the Second World War opened up even more opportunities for women's service than the last war, and uniformed women were seen not as an aberration but as a necessity. In this regard, the collection successfully demonstrated the importance of these first ladies in uniform and revived their memory, even though it took another world war and a new generation of women in uniform to do so.

By commemorating women's wartime service through the preservation and exhibition of women's uniforms, the NSCDA made a wise and prescient choice. They demonstrated women's patriotism and their desire to serve in the military. They helped record and preserve the story of America's uniformed women in the First World War. Although the collection did not remain on display permanently, the

NSCDA ensured the preservation of these women's stories since the collection survived and is now under the perpetual care of the Smithsonian.

As a form of veteranist-commemoration, philanthropy and service to female veterans formed the core of this project. The collection came to fruition because of the female veterans who donated their uniforms. Through their generosity, these women contributed to the larger mission of staking a claim for women in the war's commemorative narrative. Although their success sometimes seemed ephemeral in the interwar years when the exhibition was removed from display, their donations were not in vain. Today, we are able to study the collection and fulfill the historical and commemorative missions of the NSCDA. The collection occupies a hidden yet important place on the National Mall, where it continues to operate as a memorial to American women's wartime service. The memory of American women's veteranist-commemorations also lives on today through the film *Gold Diggers of 1933*. Like the uniforms exhibition, this film testified to the strong influence of female veteranist-commemorators on the interwar commemorative culture.

## **Chapter 6: Remember My Forgotten Man (and Woman): Popular Culture, Politics, and Women's Roles as Veteranist- Commemorators in the 1920s and 1930s**

On June 16, 1932, during the height of the Bonus March, President Herbert Hoover and First Lady Lou Henry Hoover hosted their annual White House garden party for 1,000 disabled veterans. Assisted by the First Lady's fellow WOSL members Mabel Boardman, Lena Hitchcock, and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, along with numerous uniformed nurses and aids, the veterans enjoyed sandwiches and sweet treats as the President and First Lady received them. Unlike her husband who had to return to work, Mrs. Hoover stayed for the entire party and spoke individually to many veterans, whom she and the President welcomed into the White House when it started to rain, much to the veterans' delight. Even as veterans protested on Capitol Hill, these prominent WOSL members tried to stay above the political fray and sent a message from the White House that they remained focused on serving veterans.<sup>731</sup> Other WOSL members and female veteranist-commemorators likely took to the streets to aid the needy veterans in town for the Bonus March.

In May 1933, almost one year after this garden party, Warner Brothers released the musical film *Gold Diggers of 1933*.<sup>732</sup> Its final song, "Remember My Forgotten

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<sup>731</sup> "1,000 Disabled Veterans at White House Garden Fete; Nurses and Ladies In Colorful Outfits," *The Washington Post*, June 16, 1932, pg. 8, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Matthew A. Wasniewski, ed., "Edith Nourse Rogers," *Women in Congress, 1917-2006* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006); 70-75.

<sup>732</sup> *The Busby Berkeley Collection: Gold Diggers of 1933*, dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 98 mins., Warner Brothers, 1933, DVD; American Film Institute (AFI), "Gold Diggers of 1933," *AFI: Catalog of*

Man,” created by the film’s dance director, Busby Berkeley, depicted the plight of World War One veterans who suffered during the Great Depression. Narrated by Joan Blondell’s prostitute character, male veterans stayed silent for most of the scene as impoverished women advocated for help on their behalf. From the high society of the White House to the lower-class characters depicted in this fictional Hollywood film, during the 1930s, women across the spectrum were recognized as leading advocates of veteranist-commemorations.

“Remember My Forgotten Man” revealed how women’s leadership of veteranist-commemorations had become rooted in the center of the American public discourse and debate on memorialization during the 1930s, so much so that it was endorsed by Hollywood and included in a film intended for a mass audience. Like other 1930s films such as *Heroes for Sale* (1933) and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), this scene depicted the struggles of everyday Americans and veterans. It sent a political message that urged the nation to support destitute veterans. Unlike most of the 1930s ‘Forgotten Man’ films, Berkeley’s finale in *Gold Diggers of 1933* placed women at the heart of veterans’ issues during the Great Depression by depicting how veterans’ struggles affected their female relations. Berkeley portrayed women as influential supporters of veterans who argued that the best way to commemorate the Forgotten Man was by helping him during his time of need. Berkeley demonstrated his agreement with women’s definition of veteranist-commemorations and repudiated

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*Feature Films*, n.d. < <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=1&Movie=3947>> (28 December 2014).

statuary memorials as empty and vapid projects that did little to relieve veterans' troubles.

Despite the scene's underlying rejection of empty commemorations, for several reasons, its creators did not exactly replicate the agenda of female veteranist-commemorators. Rather, the scene rhetorically gestured to the very complicated and unresolved cultural debate about commemoration that occurred in interwar American society, even among the supporters of veteranist-commemorations. First, "Remember My Forgotten Man" presented a message that endorsed the 1932 Bonus March, supported the immediate payment of the Bonus, and attacked the government for how it handled the Bonus March. On the other hand, most female veteranist-commemorators took a more politically cautious stance regarding the Bonus March. They attempted to remain publicly neutral about this issue and instead focused their energies on apolitical projects that supported veterans and stayed out of the Bonus debate. Second, the scene excluded female veterans from the ranks of the Forgotten Man and the commemorative narrative of the war, issues that female veteranist-commemorators had been battling since the Armistice. This complex scene demonstrated the neglect of female veterans during the interwar period and the incomplete inclusion of women into the war's memory, even as it reflected women's radical re-articulation of commemorative practices.

"Remember My Forgotten Man" revealed Americans' anger at the government and the pervasive disillusionment about America's participation in the Great War during the 1930s, a time when isolationism and the peace movement increased in

popularity.<sup>733</sup> After the Great Depression shattered the economy, World War veterans descended on the capital in 1932 during the Bonus March and demanded the immediate payment of their wartime Bonus, an event alluded to in “Remember My Forgotten Man.” In 1934, Congress’s Nye Committee further increased anger about the war through its investigation of the possible economic motivations behind American participation in the conflict.

The following discussion of *Gold Diggers of 1933* highlights the relation of this popular film to the work of female veteranist-commemorators and demonstrates how their ideas had reached the very center of American public discourse at the beginning of the New Deal. By reviewing the interwar political backlash against World War One and the events of the Bonus March, an assessment can be made of the reactions of female veteranist-commemorators to these incidents can be assessed and the political message of support for their work that Berkeley presented in *Gold Diggers of 1933* can be contextualized. This message of support becomes especially clear after consideration of the biographical backgrounds of the Hollywood artists who created this film.

As women veterans, war mothers, widows, and military family members, female veteranist-commemorators remained devoted to their mission of commemorating the First World War through community service and veterans advocacy, even as they reacted to the social and political upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s. Female

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<sup>733</sup> For more on the general history of the 1930s see: David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Amity Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007); Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s*; and Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-1940* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989).



veteranist-commemorators yearned for peace while they simultaneously supported national defense and advocated for veterans, issues they saw as complimentary. Having participated in the First World War, these women believed the best way to commemorate its veterans was by helping those it affected and preventing future wars. Like Berkeley, they urged the nation to “Remember My Forgotten Man” through veteranist-commemorations rather than memorials. This scene demonstrated that Berkeley agreed with their efforts to popularize veteranist-commemorations as an alternative to statuary memorials. But unlike Berkeley, who omitted female veterans from this scene, these women insisted that the Forgotten Man could also be a woman.

#### *The Interwar Political Backlash against the First World War*

The 1920s, and especially the 1930s, witnessed an increase in cynicism about the motives of American participation in the First World War and a distaste for war in general, especially as isolationism, the peace movement, and pacifism became more popular and the Great Depression intensified veterans’ struggles.<sup>734</sup> These movements impacted the work of female veteranist-commemorators. They also formed the political backdrop for Berkeley’s depiction of veterans and female veteranist-commemorators in “Remember My Forgotten Man.”

The isolationist ideology of the interwar years emerged from a long tradition of non-interventionism that dated back to the early republic. Isolationism asserted that

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<sup>734</sup> Paul A. C. Koistinen, *Planning War, Pursuing Peace: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1920-1939* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 253.

the U.S. should refrain from intervening in the foreign affairs of other nations.<sup>735</sup>

Although some isolationists were also pacifists, not all isolationists embraced pacifism, nor did all pacifists support isolationism. Some isolationists were actually willing to go to war in extreme cases such as invasion or direct threats to the homeland.<sup>736</sup>

Isolationism rejected the internationalist ideology that encouraged the U.S. to take an active role in world affairs, especially after the First World War.<sup>737</sup> Although President Woodrow Wilson had initially promised to keep the U.S. out of the European World War, in 1917 the U.S. entered the conflict and he reversed his stance even further after the Armistice. In the immediate postwar years, Wilson's Fourteen Points and advocacy for the League of Nations wedded him to internationalism.<sup>738</sup> Wilson and internationalism suffered a major defeat to isolationism in 1919, when Congress refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles and prevented the U.S. from joining the League of Nations, an action that bolstered isolationism.<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Rossini, "Isolationism and Internationalism in Perspective: Myths and Reality in American Foreign Policy," in *From Theodore Roosevelt to FDR: Internationalism and Isolationism in American Foreign Policy*, Edited by Daniela Rossini, 11-23, 113; Rieselbach, *The Roots of Isolationism: Congressional Voting and Presidential Leadership in Foreign Policy*, 3, 9-13. See also: Wiltz, *From Isolationism to War, 1931-1941*; Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941*; Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance: American Isolationism, Internationalism, and Europe, 1901-1950*; Benjamin D. Rhodes, *United States Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1941: The Golden Age of American Diplomatic and Military Complacency* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); and Justus D. Doenecke and Mark A. Stoler, *Debating Franklin D. Roosevelt's Foreign Policies, 1933-1945* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005).

<sup>736</sup> Rhodes, 131.

<sup>737</sup> Rossini, 16.

<sup>738</sup> Rossini, 16-19.

<sup>739</sup> U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, "The League of Nations, 1920," *Milestones: 1914-1920*, n.d. <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/league>> (31 October 2014).

Cynicism about war also manifested itself in the international peace movement, in which women played an influential, leading role.<sup>740</sup> The American peace movement traced its roots to the 1820s and always involved women as key participants alongside men. These women were often referred to as specifically being part of the women's peace movement. The precise beliefs of the members of the entire peace movement varied and included pacifists, isolationists, and internationalists.<sup>741</sup> Closely connected to the abolitionist movement, the suffrage campaign, and Progressivism, the American peace movement became particularly influential before, during, and after World War One.<sup>742</sup> During the interwar period, the peace movement and pacifism in general grew in popularity because of the widespread reaction against the war's violence.<sup>743</sup>

During the war, leaders such as Jane Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt helped form the Women's Peace Party, which later became the U.S. section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). This group led the pacifist

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<sup>740</sup> There is a rich historiography on the women's peace movement, see for example: Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917-1994* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Harriet Hyman Alonso, *The Women's Peace Union and the Outlawry of War, 1921-1942* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Melinda Plastas, *A Band of Noble Women: Racial Politics in the Women's Peace Movement* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Joyce Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); David S. Patterson, *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (New York: Routledge, 2008). For a documentary history of non-violence in America see: Staughton Lynd, ed., *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966).

<sup>741</sup> Koistinen, 253; Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 224.

<sup>742</sup> For a history of the U.S. women's peace movement during the First World War and its connections to the Suffrage Movement, especially the U.S. section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, see: Alonso, 56-84; Carrie A. Foster, 5-7.

<sup>743</sup> Alonso, 85-92.

women who opposed the First World War.<sup>744</sup> Women peace activists commonly invoked the “motherhood theme,” the idea that as mothers, women had a special interest to pursue peace to prevent their children’s wartime deaths.<sup>745</sup> This “motherhood theme” allowed women to conduct highly political work and activism.<sup>746</sup>

In 1924, Dorothy Detzer became the WILPF’s executive secretary, and under her leadership and lobbying efforts, the organization gained more influence by driving forward the ratification of the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928).<sup>747</sup> Detzer previously worked at Hull House with Jane Addams. She joined the peace movement after the death of her twin brother from a prolonged battle with the after-effects of mustard gas poisoning and because of her experiences in 1920 as a relief worker in Europe with the American Friends Service Committee.<sup>748</sup> The war profoundly affected her life, motivating her belief in pacifism and her efforts to create policies favorable to peace.<sup>749</sup> She wanted to prevent others from suffering like her brother and the people

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<sup>744</sup> Alonso, 59-83. For an in-depth history of the WILPF see: Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1989); Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom 1915-1965* (London: WILPF British Section, 1980); Carrie A. Foster, *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. Section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1946* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995). For more on Jane Addams and the peace movement see: Marilyn Fischer, Carol Nackenoff, and Wendy Chmielewski, eds., *Jane Addams and the Practice of Democracy* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Elshtain, *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: A Life*; Allen F. Davis, *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Jane Addams, Emily G. Blach, and Alice Hamilton, *Women at the Hague: The International Congress of Women and Its Results* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972); Jane Addams, *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1972).

<sup>745</sup> Alonso, 10-12. For more on how motherhood intersected with the peace movement and pacifism in England see chapter 4 “Reactionary of Revolutionary?: The Maternal Pacifist” in: Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1994), 131-168.

<sup>746</sup> Alonso, 11.

<sup>747</sup> Alonso, 99-100, 123-124; Jeffreys-Jones, 65-83.

<sup>748</sup> Alonso, 88-100; Jeffreys-Jones, 66-67.

<sup>749</sup> Jeffreys-Jones, 67-68.

she aided in postwar Europe. With Detzer at the helm, throughout the 1930s the WILPF and other women's groups encouraged peace and promoted disarmament, ideas also supported at times by the American War Mothers (AWM) and the Women's Overseas Service League (WOSL).<sup>750</sup> But unlike these organizations of female veteranist-commemorators, many women's peace groups opposed the military altogether and believed that the existence of a military led to the abuse of women and the proliferation and acceptance of institutionalized violence.<sup>751</sup>

As popular support for peace and neutrality expanded, so did accusations that financial reasons motivated U.S. participation in World War One.<sup>752</sup> Congress investigated these concerns from 1934 to 1936 through the Senate Special Committee Investigating the Munitions Industry, commonly called the Nye Committee.<sup>753</sup> Dorothy Detzer lobbied Congress to create this committee, and with the help of Nebraska's Republican Senator George W. Norris, she persuaded the other Republican Nebraska Senator, Gerald P. Nye, to establish and lead the committee.<sup>754</sup>

The Nye Committee investigated the munitions industry, its role in the First World War, and the possible financial motivations for U.S. participation in the war.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>750</sup> Alonso, 116-124.

<sup>751</sup> Alonso, 9.

<sup>752</sup> Ortiz provides a detailed history of the Bonus and Bonus March. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, 84, 117.

<sup>753</sup> Thomas J. Gibson, "The Nye Committee and American Isolationism," Master's Thesis, The Claremont Graduate School, 1958, 2-3; Koistenen, 253; Wayne S. Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 66-76; Carroll W. Pursell, Jr., *The Military-Industrial Complex* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), 117-128.

<sup>754</sup> The women's peace movement thus bore direct responsibility for the formation of the Nye Committee. The larger peace movement and the industrial preparedness movement also influenced the creation of the Nye Committee, although these groups sometimes conflicted because the industrial preparedness movement was led by the American Legion and the War Department who prioritized national security. Cole, 8-9, 67-68, Koistenen, 253-254, 279.

Koistenen, 253, 279; Cole, 8-9.

<sup>755</sup> Koistenen, 253, 279; Cole, 8-9.

It considered the possibility of nationalizing the munitions industry and reviewed the results of the research previously done by the 1930 War Policies Commission.<sup>756</sup> The Nye Committee also examined American financial companies and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War's procurement and economic mobilization planning efforts.<sup>757</sup> Nye boldly indicted the U.S. Government for being involved in war profiteering with the munitions industry.<sup>758</sup> The Nye Committee criticized war, and Nye himself asserted that "there is certainty that the profits of preparation for war and the profits of war itself constitute the most serious challenge to the peace of the world."<sup>759</sup> Although the Nye Committee failed to secure legislative action on many of its recommendations, such as the regulation of the shipbuilding industry and government ownership of munitions industries, it gained widespread attention and influence and lent credibility to isolationism and the peace movement.<sup>760</sup>

The Nye Committee led to the passage of the Neutrality Acts between 1935 and 1937.<sup>761</sup> With Senator Bennett Champ Clark (D-MO), Nye introduced what became the First Neutrality Act into the Senate in 1935.<sup>762</sup> When FDR signed the First Neutrality Act on August 31, 1935, he signaled that isolationists had gained enough power to influence his foreign policy. He signed the Second and Third Neutrality Acts in 1937 and 1939.<sup>763</sup> Among other things, these laws prohibited the exportation

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<sup>756</sup> Koistenen, 56, 254, Cole, 69-72.

<sup>757</sup> Koistenen, 256.

<sup>758</sup> Rhodes, 134.

<sup>759</sup> Koistenen, 253; Nye, Nov 15, 1934, as quoted in Cole, 76.

<sup>760</sup> Cole, 96-97.

<sup>761</sup> Koistenen, 297-299; Powaski, 66; Rieselbach, 11-12.

<sup>762</sup> Rhodes, 136.

<sup>763</sup> Rhodes, 137. FDR's foreign policy remains controversial, with his critics calling him an unskilled statesman and his defenders praising his overthrow of isolationists by entering World War II. Doenecke and Stoler, 1-2; George B. Tindall, David E. Shi, Thomas Lee Percy, *The Essential America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 480-481.

of weapons and the issuing of direct and indirect loans to warring nations. They restricted Americans from travelling on ships run by warring nations and they enabled the President to prevent exports of nonmilitary goods to warring nations.<sup>764</sup> Backed by the Neutrality Acts, isolationism and the peace movement maintained their grip on the country until around 1939, when the outbreak of World War Two in Europe began to decrease their popularity.<sup>765</sup>

After the onset of the Great Depression, the disillusionment with the Great War and America's motivations for entering it ignited the Bonus March, one of the most polarizing episodes of the Great Depression and a key part of the political message in "Remember My Forgotten Man." In the early 1920s, veterans had lobbied for retroactive financial compensation for their wartime pay, referred to as the Bonus. The Bonus would correct what they argued was inadequate financial compensation compared to the salaries of workers in war-related industries on the home front.<sup>766</sup> As discussed in chapters one and three, in 1924, Congress passed the Adjusted Service Compensation Act. This legislation gave World War One veterans a bonus payment of one dollar per day of domestic service and an additional twenty-five cents for every day they spent overseas.<sup>767</sup> This Bonus would not be paid until 1945, except if a veteran died, in which case the payment went to the veteran's beneficiaries.<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> Rieselbach, 11-12; for more on the Neutrality Acts see: Powaski, 66-75.

<sup>765</sup> Rieselbach, 12.

<sup>766</sup> Ortiz, 24-25; Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, *The Bonus Army: An American Epic* (New York: Walker & Company, 2004), 4-5; Roger Daniels, *The Bonus March: An Episode of the Great Depression* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1971); W.W. Waters (as told to William C. White), *B.E.F. The Whole Story of the Bonus Army* (New York, Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969); Donald J. Lisio, *The President and Protest: Hoover, MacArthur, and the Bonus Riot* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994); Harris Gaylord Warren, *Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>767</sup> Dickson and Allen, 4-5; Ortiz, 9, 23-24.

<sup>768</sup> Lisio, ix; Ortiz, 1.

After the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression heightened veterans' hardships, some veterans lobbied for the early payment of the Bonus, a request opposed by President Herbert Hoover.<sup>769</sup> In response, thousands of veterans and their families descended on Washington D.C. in the spring and summer of 1932 in an attempt to persuade Congress to distribute the Bonus early.<sup>770</sup> Dubbed the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF) as a reminder of their service in the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), the veterans set up shanty towns dubbed Hoovervilles. Some illegally squatted in condemned buildings from which they were later evicted by the police who shot and killed two protestors.<sup>771</sup> After this incident, Hoover agreed to call in federal troops under the command of Army Chief of Staff and First World War veteran General Douglas MacArthur, who led his soldiers in an assault on the Bonus Marchers and pushed them out of the city.<sup>772</sup> This episode, and Hoover's missteps with the Bonus March, further ruined his deteriorating reputation, villianized him in the eyes of the public, and helped FDR win the 1932 Presidential election.<sup>773</sup>

Even before the Bonus March, FDR presented himself as the champion of the ordinary Americans who suffered most from the Great Depression. The Bonus March strengthened this persona, although FDR did not support the early payment of the Bonus and tried to keep the issue out of his campaign.<sup>774</sup> Nevertheless, FDR promoted this image during the campaign, especially when he coined the term the

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<sup>769</sup> Lisio, ix.

<sup>770</sup> Lisio, x; Ortiz, 2.

<sup>771</sup> Lisio, x; Ortiz, 2.

<sup>772</sup> Lisio x-xi, 1-4. Lisio argues that Hoover ordered the army's operations to be limited and that he was unfairly villianized for the assault. He asserts it was unsound rumors of a communist conspiracy and MacArthur's disobedience that led to the assault.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> Shlaes, 125-137; Ortiz, 58-59. Many veterans later criticized FDR for his opposition to the Bonus and the 1933 Economy Act which reduced veterans' benefits, Ortiz, 64, 66.



“Forgotten Man” in a radio address on April 7, 1932.<sup>775</sup> In this address, known as “The Forgotten Man Speech,” FDR referenced the First World War and called on citizens to mobilize again as they had during the war, but this time against the Great Depression. FDR, who served as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy during World War One, often used such martial metaphors in his rhetoric about the Depression.<sup>776</sup> In this speech, he criticized Hoover for forgetting the “infantry of our economic army” and proclaimed that:

these unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power for plans like those of 1917 that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.<sup>777</sup>

When he utilized the phrase the “Forgotten Man,” FDR recognized the suffering of ordinary Americans and their importance to rebuilding the economy. He foreshadowed the collective efforts of the government and the citizens that he later encapsulated in the New Deal.<sup>778</sup> The mass media and popular culture picked up on the symbolism of the phrase and incorporated it into various cultural products, especially films.<sup>779</sup> Referred to by some film scholars as the ‘Forgotten Man films,’

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<sup>775</sup> Martin Rubin describes this speech as “FDR’s most celebrated speech of the 1932 campaign” and concludes that “the phrase *forgotten man* immediately seized the public imagination.” Martin Rubin, “The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal” in *Movies and Mass Culture*, Ed. John Belton (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996): 59-92; 72; Jeffrey Spivak, *Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 76; Franklin D. Roosevelt, “128: Radio Address From Albany, New York: “The Forgotten Man” Speech April 7, 1932,” *The American Presidency Project*, n.d., <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88408>> (31 October 2014); Jonathan Kahana, “The Forgotten Man; or, How Hollywood Invented Welfare,” *Camera Obscura* 62, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2006): 74-107, 81-82; Shlaes, 127-129.

<sup>776</sup> “The Forgotten Man” Speech April 7, 1932.” For more on how FDR used the analogy of war to promote the New Deal see: Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 15-26.

<sup>777</sup> “The Forgotten Man” Speech April 7, 1932.”

<sup>778</sup> Kahana, 84.

<sup>779</sup> Kahana, 81-89; Hammond, 282-284.

this genre included *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, *Heroes for Sale*, *My Man Godfrey* (1936), and others.<sup>780</sup> In these films, the war bore responsibility for veterans' struggles, although the Forgotten Man was often tangential to the main plot, as in *Gold Diggers of 1933*.<sup>781</sup> By taking the title of "Remember My Forgotten Man" from the contemporary political language, this scene directly connected its message to political events and reinterpreted FDR's speech to apply specifically to World War One veterans.

#### *Female Veteranist-Commemorators' Reactions to the Disillusionment of the Interwar Era*

In the midst of this atmosphere of disillusionment, depression, and veterans' protests, female veteranist-commemorators pursued their goals and participated in these political debates. Although the approaches of female veteranist-commemorators often differed, these women were connected by their devotion to supporting veterans. Inspired by their wartime services and sacrifices, female veteranist-commemorators emphasized how their experiences led them to detest war and support peace, although they cannot be labeled as pacifists or as opponents of the military since their main mission concentrated on helping and defending veterans. They opposed war because it would harm a new generation of Americans and create another class of suffering

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<sup>780</sup> Kahana, 75-76. "Remember My Forgotten Man" and its interpretation of (poor) women as the heroes and helpers of the Forgotten Man can be seen as the antithesis to *My Man Godfrey* which portrays (wealthy) women as selfish insensitive to the plight of the Forgotten Man, so much so that they collect them in a scavenger hunt. *My Man Godfrey*, dir. Gregory LaCava, 93 mins., Universal Pictures, 1936, DVD.

<sup>781</sup> Andrew Kelly, *Cinema and the Great War* (London: Routledge, 1997), 149-150; Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 149; Hammond, 284.

veterans. Rather, like the Daughters of the American Revolution did before them, the majority of female veteranist-commemorators supported national defense and military preparedness as a way to achieve peace.<sup>782</sup> The American War Mothers and the Women's Overseas Service League simultaneously supported some aspects of the peace movement, even while they advocated for a strong national defense program. They understood that advocating for peace supported veterans by preventing another war.

As discussed in chapter three, the outspoken support of the peace movement by the founder of the American War Mothers, Alice French, influenced the organization's stance on peace. In September 1920, French declared that she wanted the AWM to play a role in the peace movement. She envisioned the AWM as "a league of Mothers that will enforce peace" and she explained how she had "an ambition now that this will be an international league of mothers to enforce peace."<sup>783</sup> The first charter of the AWM even included in its object statement a mission that combined their belief in peace with their support of the military. It stated that the AWM would "keep sacred the ties that bind together the mothers who gave their own blood and energy for their Country's heroes and the World's Peace."<sup>784</sup> French

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<sup>782</sup> Morgan, 108-11. Morgan explains how before WWI, the DAR participated in female peace activism along with the Women's Peace Party and believed that military preparedness could help efforts to achieve peace. The female veteranist-commemorators of the interwar era seem to have followed in their footsteps and combined their beliefs in peace work and military preparedness. However, unlike the DAR before the war, these postwar women did not focus on what Morgan calls "men-centered nationalism" but tried to place women in the center of nationalism with more authority and opportunities. Perhaps women's advances during the war led them to this platform.

<sup>783</sup> "American war mothers first executive board meeting Louisville, Kentucky September 29-30, 1920" pg. 2; no folder, unlabeled box, American War Mothers National Headquarters Collection, Gift of Nelda P. Bleckler, Women's Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>784</sup> "History of Indiana Chapter of American War Mothers, Scrapbook of Alice Moore French," pg. 31, M458, Folder 9, Box 1, pg. 31, Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

wanted the AWM to become leaders in the international peace movement while they commemorated veterans through relief. She hoped that the members of the AWM would be the last generation of war mothers in a world without war.<sup>785</sup>

As the AWM matured as an organization, they emphasized the importance of national preparedness to the prevention of war and the effort for world peace. Mrs. McCluer, the AWM national president from 1923 to 1927, stressed that “no group wants peace more than our own, but we would not jeopardize the safety of our organization...we must guard our nationalism, and the American War Mothers, who really served and paid the price, realize what preparedness means. We stand behind the army and navy.”<sup>786</sup> Like other female veteranist-commemorators, the AWM believed that preparedness could help prevent the outbreak of war.

The Women’s Overseas Service League also expressed their opposition to war and their desire to pursue peace and international disarmament. At their First National Convention in 1921, the WOSL passed a resolution in favor of disarmament that they sent to President Harding. The resolution explained that WOSL members were motivated to support international disarmament because they had “experienced and seen the horror, suffering and devastation caused by war,” and realized the necessity of international disarmament to the prevention of war.<sup>787</sup> The WOSL professed that they were “especially desirous of doing all in their power to repair the damage

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<sup>785</sup> See preceding, American War Mothers chapter; du Plessis, “Alice French: Indiana War Mothers, From World War I “Kitchen Soldiers” to Postwar Immigrant Reformers;” and “Transcript of Proceedings: Second Biennial Convention of American War Mothers, 1921,” pg. 31.

<sup>786</sup> “Guard Nationalism, Mrs. M’Cluer Says,” *The Indianapolis News*, Folder 8: AWM Indiana Chapter Scrapbook 1921-26, M458, Box: 1, Alice Moore French Papers, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>787</sup> “Resolution Sent to President Harding by Women’s Overseas Service League at Meeting June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1921,” Folder: First National Convention, 1921 Philadelphia; Box: Women’s Overseas Service League: Reports, Ann. Natl. Conventions, 1921-25 (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) Box 7; National WWI Museum.

wrought by the Great War.” They felt that “the burden of taxation upon the people who took part in the Great War can now be very materially lightened by international disarmament.”<sup>788</sup> They resolved to ask the President “to call a Conference, as soon as the same can be conveniently arranged, to discuss World Disarmament.”<sup>789</sup> The WOSL’s wartime experiences overseas convinced them to support peace efforts.

The WOSL reiterated their support for peace advocacy throughout the 1920 and 1930s. For example, during a 1930 “Armistice Tea” given by the Toledo, Ohio unit, the unit’s minutes noted that “Miss Charlotte Ruegger told of her war experiences in a most interesting and impressive way. It brought back to most of us some of our own experiences “over there,” and made us realize anew the horrors and uselessness of war.”<sup>790</sup> The Toledo Unit spent the fall of 1935 writing letters to Secretary of State Cordell Hull and each Ohio congressman. These letters urged them to prevent the U.S. from shipping goods to countries at war and reflected the concerns of the Nye Committee.<sup>791</sup> The Toledo WOSL unit believed their wartime experiences justified their desire to promote peace and prevent war.<sup>792</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> Ibid.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid. It is likely that this was referring to the Washington Naval Conference. For more on the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments see: Thomas H. Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1970).

<sup>790</sup> “Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> 1930,” Folder: W.O.S.L. Records Minute Book, Toledo Unit c.1920-1946 84.150.2; Box: W.O.S.L. RECORDS, Minute Books of Toledo, Ohio Unit, 2 vols. 84.150.2-.3; National WWI Museum.

<sup>791</sup> “Nov 11, 1935,” Folder: W.O.S.L. Records Minute Book, Toledo Unit c.1920-1946 84.150.2; Box: W.O.S.L. RECORDS, Minute Books of Toledo, Ohio Unit, 2 vols. 84.150.2-.3; National WWI Museum.

<sup>792</sup> “December 9, 1935,” Folder: W.O.S.L. Records Minute Book, Toledo Unit c.1920-1946 84.150.2; Box: W.O.S.L. RECORDS, Minute Books of Toledo, Ohio Unit, 2 vols. 84.150.2-.3; National WWI Museum.

Even as the WOSL supported peace efforts, they also supported national defense, which many WOSL leaders and members believed necessary to achieving peace. Sometime between 1925 and 1927, even before the war clouds gathered over Europe again, WOSL National President Helen Douglas, who later served as a Democratic Congressional Representative from Georgia, wrote an article in *National Defense* magazine titled “The Folly of Unpreparedness.”<sup>793</sup> In the article, Douglas urged peace through national defense, explaining how the WOSL’s wartime experiences could not “be readily cast aside.” These experiences had inspired the WOSL to pass a 1924 resolution that supported defense, preparedness, and peace.<sup>794</sup> The WOSL frequently sent representatives to the Women’s Patriotic Conference on National Defense sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary. This recurring national convention brought together women’s patriotic organizations that pledged their loyalty to the U.S. and advocated for national preparedness.<sup>795</sup> In March 1930, the Third Corps Area, composed of residents of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington

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<sup>793</sup> From 1945 to 1947, under her married name “Mankin, Helen Douglas served a Congressional Representative from Georgia. Wasniewski, “Helen Douglas Mankin,” *Women in Congress, 1917-2006*; 244-249; Lorraine Nelson Spritzer, *The Belle of Ashby Street: Helen Douglas Mankin and Georgia Politics* (Athens, Georgia: The University Press of Georgia, 1982; “Mankin, Helen Douglas,” *History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives*, n.d. <<http://history.house.gov/People/Listing/M/MANKIN,-Helen-Douglas-%28M000097%29/>> (24 January 2015).

<sup>794</sup> “The Folly of Unpreparedness” in *National Defense*, pg. 5-6 in Scrapbook of Toledo Unit Kept by Julia Norton; Box: W.O.S.L. Records, Scrapbook of Toledo Unit, kept by Julia Norton. 84.150.1, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>795</sup> In 1930 they sent Faustine Dennis and members of the Washington Unit to the Conference and in 1932 they sent President Shirley Farr. *Carry On*, Vol. XI No. 3, Aug. 1932, pg. 21, MS 32, Box 38, The Women’s Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections; “Report of National President, Women’s Overseas Service League July 1929-May 1930,” unlabeled folder of WOSL documents, no box, WOSL Collection, National WWI Museum; John J. Noll, “Preserve, Protect, Defend,” *The American Legion Monthly*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (April 1933), 26-27, 42-42; Hill, 33-338.

D.C., and Virginia, proposed a resolution later adopted at the 1930 WOSL National Convention.<sup>796</sup> It stated that:

believing that the principles, ideals and institutions of our government as provided for by the Constitution of the United States must be maintained, and further deeply desiring peace, we hereby declare, that while subscribing to the principle of world arbitration we also firmly believe that in order to maintain peace the citizens of this country must support an adequate National defense, as provided for and outlined by the National Defense Act...<sup>797</sup>

The WOSL saw peace activism as compatible with their support for veterans. They believed that national defense prevented war. These beliefs distanced them from pacifists. Their peace platform contrasted with the mainstream peace movement and its leaders. They especially differed from Dorothy Detzer who denounced U.S. preparations for World War Two even after Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and also campaigned against the Lend-Lease Act.<sup>798</sup>

Despite these differences from the peace movement, the WOSL interacted with the movement and its leaders, even if they were not part of the mainstream peace movement themselves.<sup>799</sup> On October 16, 1928, the Toledo Unit “agreed that the entire Unit should attend the lecture by Miss Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, to be given on Armistice Sunday afternoon at Trinity Church on the subject of “International Peace,” the lecture being sponsored by the Committee on the Cause

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<sup>796</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. IX, Aug. 1930, No. 3, pg. 40, Folder: 1930, Box: 1922-1932; *Carry On*, Vol. V, No. 4, Nov 1926, inside cover, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>797</sup> “Report, Vice-President, Third Corps Area,” unlabeled folder of WOSL documents, no box, WOSL Collection, National WWI Museum.

<sup>798</sup> Jeffreys-Jones, 82-83.

<sup>799</sup> Alonso, *The Women’s Peace Union and the Outlawry of War, 1921-1942*, 167.

and Cure of War.”<sup>800</sup> They made this decision on the same day they decided to condense literature on the proposed National Defense Act to send to every patriotic organization in the city asking for support.<sup>801</sup> This WOSL unit supported national defense and peace efforts even as they interacted with Jane Addams, who despised military patriotism and argued that national defense led to militarism.<sup>802</sup>

As the 1932 Bonus March captured the nation’s attention, female veteranist-commemorators would have been well aware of its powerful symbolic message. As discussed in chapter one, the WOSL subtly addressed the Bonus March during their July 1932 National Convention, but like their close partners the American Legion, it seems that the WOSL and the AWM attempted to remain publicly neutral about the events in the capital.<sup>803</sup> To avoid becoming embroiled in the political turmoil surrounding the Bonus March, these groups focused on their commemorative service work that immediately aided veterans.

While the Bonus March predominantly brought the plight of male war veterans to national attention, the needs of the numerous women who served overseas were less well-known by the general public because their status placed many of them outside the purview of government assistance. Even though they were omitted from the lyrics of “Remember My Forgotten Man” and from the scene’s depiction of struggling

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<sup>800</sup> “October 16, 1928,” Folder: W.O.S.L. Records Minute Book, Toledo Unit c.1920-1946 84.150.2; Box: W.O.S.L. RECORDS, Minute Books of Toledo, Ohio Unit, 2 vols. 84.150.2-.3, WOSL Collection, National WWI Museum.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid. First passed in 1920, the National Defense Act of 1920 reorganized the Army after the lessons learned in WWI and helped to strengthen the National Guard. It is not clear if this unit’s work was in support of this iteration of the act or another later version that may or may not have passed. Koistinen, 5-7.

<sup>802</sup> Elshtain, 219.

<sup>803</sup> *Carry On* Vol. XI, No. 3, Aug 1932, pg. 26, MS 32, Box 38, The Women’s Overseas Service League Records, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.



veterans, many of the women who served and sacrificed during World War One can be considered Forgotten Women. These women believed themselves to be veterans of the war like the members of the Bonus Expeditionary Force, even if the government did not officially recognize them as such. The women who championed veteranist-commemorations continuously advocated for the rights of these women.

The government did officially recognize a small group of women as veterans, a designation that made them eligible for the Bonus. This group included only the women who had served as Army or Navy nurses or as enlisted members of the Navy or Marine Corps.<sup>804</sup> The government's narrow definition of "veteran" excluded countless women who deployed overseas in a variety of capacities. Today, many of these women would be labeled as working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) doing charitable work or as contractors who directly supported the military, such as the 'Hello Girls' who served with U.S. Army Signal Corps.<sup>805</sup> Regardless of their formal status and the arguments about what the government owed them, many women had real needs after the war, and women's veteranist-commemoration organizations aided them.

The members of the American Legion's Yeoman (F) Post 50, a Philadelphia post composed entirely of former members of the Navy Yeoman (F), realized the importance of their inclusion in the Bonus. In 1924, they helped other women who were eligible for the Bonus fill out their applications. At their monthly Executive

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<sup>804</sup> For more on women's veteran benefits and lack thereof see: Susan Zeiger, 167-174 and Ebbert and Hall, *The First, the Few the Forgotten: Navy and Marine Corps Women in World War I*, 97-110.

<sup>805</sup> The Hello Girls' did not receive veterans' benefits until 1979 after a long struggle to press their case. Rebecca Robbins, Raines, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1999), 170, 204.

Committee meeting on June 30, 1924, “application blanks for Bonus were distributed and finger prints were applied to blanks, and help in filling them out was given at this time. Many ex-service women appeared and were ably assisted by members of the committee for this purpose.”<sup>806</sup> Post 50 commemorated their fellow female veterans’ service by helping them obtain their government benefits. They understood that many women needed assistance because women were not obvious candidates for the Bonus like men.

The WOSL advocated for officially designated female veterans as well as those women who were denied that status, whether or not they were WOSL members. Through their service and advocacy work, they publicized the history of women’s roles in the war. They constantly reminded the public that many women received no government benefits for their service and were excluded from the Bonus.<sup>807</sup> The Pittsburgh WOSL unit reported in February 1937 that when they sent their annual appeal for funds to their local friends and supporters, “since the needs of many service men had been cared for through the bonus, part of the appeal was made on behalf of disabled service-women.”<sup>808</sup> They gave the following explanation in their appeal:

Contrary to the general belief, Red Cross nurses, welfare workers, members of the Signal Corps and others did not receive a bonus, neither are they eligible for help of any kind from the government or the organizations with which they served. Many of these women are now alone in the world and are in need of physical care for which they

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<sup>806</sup> “June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1924,” in “History of Post 50 American Legion 1919-1951, Collection #1216, Gift of Rita McDonald, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

<sup>807</sup> Zeiger, 167-172.

<sup>808</sup> *Carry On*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, February 1937, pg. 28-29, Folder: 1937, unlabeled box, *Carry On* Periodical Collection, Gift of Carolyn Habgood, Women’s Memorial Foundation Collection.

cannot pay. Your contribution, however small, will help to alleviate a real need.<sup>809</sup>

The Pittsburgh unit received a generous response and ample donations. This enabled them to help former overseas women who lacked official veteran status, were excluded from the Bonus, and often relied on their former colleagues for support. Many of these women were truly Forgotten Women, perhaps even more overlooked than the Forgotten Men. Female veteranist-commemorators came to their aid while they worked for world peace. Although Hollywood endorsed these women's argument in favor of veteranist-commemorations in *Gold Diggers of 1933*, their efforts to publicize the plight of forgotten female veterans achieved less success, as demonstrated by the omission of female veterans from "Remember My Forgotten Man."

*Gold Diggers of 1933: A Popular Culture Anthem for Veteranist-Commemorations*

Like other 1930s Hollywood films, *Gold Diggers of 1933* communicated powerful political and social messages to audiences.<sup>810</sup> The film's finale, "Remember My Forgotten Man," symbolically depicted many women's belief in veteranist-commemorations, their hopes for peace, and their dedication to helping America's Forgotten Men. It endorsed American women's leadership of veteranist-commemorations through its female narrator and female chorus who commemorated male veterans by advocating on their behalf. The choice to portray such strong female

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<sup>809</sup> Ibid.

<sup>810</sup> For more on how Hollywood filmmakers of the 1930s used their films to send political messages see: Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics on the Age of the New Deal*; May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way*; Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Social History of American Movies*; Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films*.

characters demonstrated female veteranist-commemorators' powerful impact on the interwar commemorative culture and debate. Although these women's argument for veteranist-commemorations reached Hollywood, their efforts to include women veterans in the ranks of the Forgotten Man failed to resonate in Hollywood, since Berkeley did not portray women veterans alongside male veterans.

Produced by Warner Brothers, *Gold Diggers of 1933* derived its plot from the popular 1919 play *The Gold Diggers*, upon which that studio had already based two films.<sup>811</sup> Mervyn LeRoy directed this 1933 musical version from the screenplay written by James Seymour, David Boehm, and Ben Markson. Busby Berkeley served as the dance director in charge of the musical numbers written by the songwriting team of Al Dubin and Harry Warren.<sup>812</sup> Part of the popular genre of 'backstage' musicals that focused on a play's production, the film followed a group of chorus girls struggling to find work during the Depression. Polly Parker's (Ruby Keeler) love interest, the secretly wealthy Brad Roberts (Dick Powell), offers to front the money for a new show that depicts the challenges of the Depression and will put the girls to work again. Hijinks and romance ensue as the chorus girls teach Brad's relatives a lesson about misjudging them as gold diggers. Although the film focused on this comedic plot, references to the Depression were interspersed throughout, most notably in the opening number "We're in the Money" and the finale.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> These were a 1923 silent version and a 1929 sound version. Arthur Hove, ed., "Introduction: In Search of Happiness," in *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980); 9-11.

<sup>812</sup> Hove, 12-14, 18-22, 45.

<sup>813</sup> For example "We're In the Money" represents Depression-era daydreams of wealth in the form of a musical number interrupted during rehearsals because the show is being shut down for lack of money, which Ginger Rogers' character Fay explains as being the result of "the Depression, dearie." *The Busby Berkeley Collection: Gold Diggers of 1933*.

The finale, “Remember My Forgotten Man,” formed part of the film’s ‘show within a show’ and occurred after the resolution of the film’s main plot. Joan Blondell played a prostitute who narrated the scene and led a female chorus in an emotional musical lament about the plight of destitute World War One veterans. In the first part of the scene, she was joined by African-American singer Etta Moten who sang the chorus and symbolically included African-Americans among the Forgotten Man, although Berkeley visually segregated her from the white actors. The middle of the scene flashed back to the battlefields of World War One and showed the transformation of a line of American Doughboys from green recruits to combat-weary veterans. This line of Doughboys transitioned into a bread line of the same men during the Great Depression. The song ended with an elaborate tableau of marching Doughboys, veterans, and women who all pled for veterans and their families to be remembered and aided during the Great Depression (figure 6.1).



Figure 6.1: The ending vignette of the “Remember My Forgotten Man” number. Used with permission from the core collection, production files of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The rich and detailed symbolism in “Remember My Forgotten Man” warrants a close and comprehensive analysis of the scene. Berkeley used each shot to portray the desperate situation of America’s forgotten veterans. He created a complex, multi-layered musical number that visualized some of the tenets of veteranist-commemorations. As James Gilbert reminds us, images are a “crucial ingredient in memory” and historians need to take heed of their analytical power.<sup>814</sup> Keeping this in mind, “Excursus A” contains an in-depth, shot-by-shot analysis of “Remember My

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<sup>814</sup> James Gilbert, *Whose Fair? Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 102-105.

Forgotten Man.” This excursus guides the reader through the entire scene and provides the context that clarifies this chapter’s analysis of the skit.

Much has been written by scholars about *Gold Diggers of 1933* and “Remember My Forgotten Man.”<sup>815</sup> Attention has focused most on the cinematography, the creation of Berkeley’s geometric “Berkeleyesque” choreography, the meaning of his visual largess in the context of the collectivism of the Depression and 1930s politics, and the male gaze, gender roles, and sexuality. Viewed through the lens of veteranist-commemorations, this much-studied scene can take on yet another dimension. The way that Joan Blondell’s character comforts, advocates for, and commemorates the Forgotten Man can be understood as a cinematic depiction of women’s leadership of veteranist-commemorations. The scene represented on screen this practical form of commemoration advocated by women. In

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<sup>815</sup> Sources that discuss *Gold Diggers of 1933*, “Remember My Forgotten Man,” and how Berkeley’s chorus numbers represent the collectivism of the New Deal and Great Depression include but are not limited to: Arthur Hove, ed., “Introduction: In Search of Happiness,” in *Gold Diggers of 1933*; Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Kelly, *Cinema and the Great War*; Richard Barrios, *A Song in the Dark: The Birth of the Musical Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Barry Keith Grant, *The Hollywood Film Musical* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Mick LaSalle, *Dangerous Men: Pre-Code Hollywood and the Birth of the Modern Man* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002); “Michael E. Birdwell, ““After They’ve Seen Paree”: The AEF in Film and Music,” in *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*, Ed. Mark A. Snell (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008); 238-263; 252; Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression*, xx, 233-236; Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans, *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985), 48-49; Rubin, “The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal;” Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Allen L. Woll, *The Hollywood Musical Goes to War* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983); Martin Rubin, “1933: Movies and the New Deal in Entertainment,” in *America Cinema of the 1930s: Themes and Variations* Ed. Ina Rae Hark (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); 92-116; Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, eds., *Hollywood’s World War I: Motion Picture Images* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997).

many ways, Blondell's character stood in for Gold Star wives, mothers, women veterans, and other female veteranist-commemorators.<sup>816</sup>

The scene's political message has been central to many scholarly analyses. The scene directly referenced the Bonus March and alluded to the disillusionment with the Great War in the 1930s.<sup>817</sup> Scholars consider the number to be "an earnest call to action," "a social document," and a "propaganda piece."<sup>818</sup> One scholar even called it "a choreographic version" of the popular musical anthem of the Great Depression, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime."<sup>819</sup> With the election of FDR, still fresh at the time of the film's release on May 27, 1933, some academics have contended that the inclusion of "Remember My Forgotten Man" constituted a risky choice since not all Americans supported FDR.<sup>820</sup> Although *Gold Diggers of 1933* was written during the 1932 presidential campaign before the implementation of the New Deal, because the film opened in New York and Los Angeles during the week

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<sup>816</sup> Women were often seen as central to fighting the Great Depression. Eleanor Roosevelt even published *It's Up to the Women* in 1933 to demonstrate women's importance to helping the nation through this crisis. Ware, *Holding their Own: American Women in the 1930s*, 1.

<sup>817</sup> For more on how *Gold Diggers of 1933* depicted the Bonus March and the film's political message, see: Richard Barrios, *Dangerous Rhythm: Why Movie Musicals Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 24, 182 (footnote 8); Barrios, *A Song in the Dark*, 376; LaSalle, 190; Rubin, 72-74; and Grant, 62. For more on how FDR used the analogy of war to promote the New Deal see: Sherry, 15-26. Rubin argues that the number's "directness is a consequence of its political commitment" and that "Remember My Forgotten Man" is one of Hollywood's most hard-hitting political statements of the 1930s—much more so than the treatment of similar material in Warner Bros.'s *Heroes for Sale* (also 1933)." Rubin, 74.

<sup>818</sup> Barrios, *Dangerous Rhythm*, 24. Grant, 56-57. Grant explains that "the film depicts not just the union of the three couples in love but also "the larger union of the nation itself during the economic crisis of the Depression. This pattern informs many of the Warner Bros' musicals of the period, including *Gold Diggers of 1933*" (56-57). Tony Thomas and Jim Terry explain that the finale is "a trenchant social comment, making a plea for the unemployed servicemen who had been hit hard by the Depression" and was most likely well received by veteran's organizations such as the American Legion." Tony Thomas and Jim Terry with Busby Berkeley, *The Busby Berkeley Book* (New York: New York Graphic Society, Inc., 1973), 61. Arthur Hove, disagrees and interprets the lyrics as ambiguous and understands the number as a whole to be incongruous, arguing that the film is about romance and not social justice or the Depression. My analysis rejects his argument. Hove, 25-31.

<sup>819</sup> Dickstein, 235.

<sup>820</sup> LaSalle, 191; American Film Institute (AFI), "*Gold Diggers of 1933*."



that Congress passed the National Recovery Act (NRA), one scholar asserted that the film, “a big box-office hit, itself became an example of stimulating the economy—the perfect instantiation of Warner Bros’ promotional angle when it was released: “A New Deal for Entertainment.””<sup>821</sup> Because 1930s Hollywood filmmakers frequently put political and social messages into popular films intended for mass audiences and often considered romance films and musicals legitimate mediums for these messages, the political implications of *Gold Diggers of 1933* must be taken seriously.<sup>822</sup>

Scholars have also focused on the gendered aspects of the scene’s social message. They have noted that this skit is as much about women as it is about men.<sup>823</sup> One scholar commented how the scene showed that if the government found “it distasteful to come to the aid of able-bodied men, helping them might be a good idea, if only to prevent the blossom of American womanhood from having to peddle itself on the street.”<sup>824</sup> By abandoning the Forgotten Man, the government also abandoned women and forced them into prostitution. Helping these women might seem more appealing to the government than helping their destitute men, for these women, like their husbands, sons, and brothers, also sacrificed for the war effort and could be considered victims of the war.<sup>825</sup>

Much of the film has been read as an equation between economics and sex.

One scholar explained that:

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<sup>821</sup> Grant, 56-57; Spivak, 72.

<sup>822</sup> Giovacchini, 1-9. My analysis of “Remember My Forgotten Man” follows Giovacchini’s call for scholars to analyze the political intentions of Hollywood filmmakers and study their work to better understand the social, political, and cultural climate of the 1930s. Like other 1930s Hollywood films, *Gold Diggers of 1933* wove contemporary political and social commentary throughout the story, balancing moments of escapist entertainment with somber political messages.

<sup>823</sup> La Salle, 191.

<sup>824</sup> LaSalle, 191.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid.

For working men in the Depression, the loss of their jobs or the decrease in their earning power represents a form of impotence. What Blondell and the other women in the number are saying is: because my man can't get a job, he has lost his virility-he can't love me the way he used to do.<sup>826</sup>

The men's upright stances during the war represented their virility while their slumped posture as they left the battlefield symbolized castration.<sup>827</sup> As for Blondell's streetwalker character:

it is the woman who dominates the song, supplies its voice, stands on the highest steps, lights the cigarette, and subdues the club-wielding cop...the women in "Remember My Forgotten Man" regard their fallen men with nothing but sympathy and concern, on an equal footing...they view their relationship not as dependent but interdependent.<sup>828</sup>

This assessment of the scene's female characters as strong, vocal leaders lends credence to the interpretation that these characters could also represent female veteranist-commemorators. Scholars have overlooked the fact that women veterans could be included among the Forgotten Men. Even though most of the song and Berkeley's staging of it excluded explicit images of or references to women veterans, Dubin's vague lyrics did leave a little room for interpretation by the audience. A member of the WOSL, the AWM, or a Gold Star mother or widow who watched this film could have conceived of herself as among the forgotten Americans it depicted, especially since women narrated the scene. Blondell's character could even be considered a Gold Star widow who lost her husband through destitution during the Depression rather than on the battlefield. Like other female veteranist-

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<sup>826</sup> Rubin, "The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal," 73.

<sup>827</sup> Rubin, "The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal," 73.

<sup>828</sup> Rubin, *Showstoppers*, 105; Grant, 67-69; Rubin, "The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal", 77.

commemorators, perhaps she now led efforts to honor his memory by helping veterans. Or perhaps her character served somehow during the war so that she could be a considered a veteran and a Forgotten Man herself.

The timely political and social message of “Remember My Forgotten Man” makes sense given the political leanings of Warner Brothers, the studio that produced it. Film historians consider Warner Brothers to have been one of the most socially and politically conscious studios in the 1930s. Warner Brothers often took risks and produced films with controversial subjects.<sup>829</sup> Jack Warner leaned Democratic and openly supported FDR, and later, the New Deal. The studio even sent a contingent of their stars, including *Gold Diggers of 1933*’s Joan Blondell, to FDR’s 1933 inauguration.<sup>830</sup>

Initially, “Remember My Forgotten Man” was meant to appear somewhere in the middle of the film.<sup>831</sup> The scene became the finale because Jack Warner and his colleagues realized the number’s emotional power and the force with which it would

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<sup>829</sup> Kelly, 96; Dickstein, xv, 233-236, 313-314; Cass Warner Sperling and Cork Millner, with Jack Warner, Jr., *Hollywood Be Thy Name: The Warner Brothers Story* (Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1994); Babington and Evans, 46-49; Schatz, *The Genius of the System*; Bergman, *We’re in the Money: Depression America and Its Films*; Although most scholars agree that Warner Brothers was sympathetic to FDR, Nick Roddick argues that the appraisal of Warner Bros as being the most supportive of FDR “is based on a fairly small proportion of the company’s overall output... Warners may have made more such films than other studios, but the Depression is, for example, an important element” in other films from different studios. Nick Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Brothers in the 1930s* (London: Garden House Press, 1983), 249-251.

<sup>830</sup> Matthew Kennedy, *Joan Blondell: A Life Between Takes* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 54. Warner Brothers showcased their support for the New Deal most clearly in *Footlight Parade*, the next in their sequence of backstage musicals that featured dance direction by Berkeley. Released in October 1933, the dancers in the “Shanghai Lil” create an image of FDR’s face from flags filmed from overhead; these flags then become the National Recovery Administration (NRA) eagle. *The Busby Berkeley Collection: Footlight Parade*, dir. Lloyd Bacon, 104 mins. Warner Brothers, 1933; Rubin, “The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal,” 76-77; Dickstein, 240; Barrios, *A Song in the Dark*, 377-379; Bergman, 64-65; American Film Institute, “Footlight Parade,” *AFI Catalog of Feature Films*, n.d., <<http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=3881>> (21 November 2014); Sklar, 243; Kennedy, 54.

<sup>831</sup> Kelly, 153; Barrios, *A Song in the Dark*, 377.

close the film.<sup>832</sup> In doing so, like *Heroes for Sale* and other Forgotten Man films, the political statement in *Gold Diggers of 1933*'s finale left the audience to contemplate its message as they returned to the realities of the Depression.<sup>833</sup> Using this scene as the finale, combined with the opening number "We're In the Money," bookended the film between two songs that commented on the political and social struggles of the Great Depression and used women as the central narrators and heroes of these musical political agitation pieces. The film began and ended with women in the spotlight and momentarily shifted the focus of World War One films from men to women, even though it omitted female veterans.

The film's combination of political commentary, innovative musical numbers, and comedy helped it receive mostly laudatory reviews. *The New York Times* praised the film as "good entertainment." It earned almost a million dollars more than the earlier 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, making *Gold Diggers* the second highest grossing picture of

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<sup>832</sup> Barrios, *A Song in the Dark*, 377. Barrios found this information from Variety, May 30, 1933; Grant, 64.

<sup>833</sup> *Forbidden Hollywood Collection, Volume 3: Heroes for Sale*, dir. William A. Wellman, 71 minutes, Warner Brothers, 1933, DVD.

1933.<sup>834</sup> *The Washington Post* reported how after breaking attendance records, the film's run repeatedly got extended at Washington D.C. theatres.<sup>835</sup>

Many reviews noted the finale's political implications but focused more on assessing the film's lighthearted moments and did not deeply probe the finale's meaning or begin a debate about its message. One review in *The New York Times* merely described this skit as "particularly cleverly presented, with striking costumes and impressive staging. The "Forgotten Man" is the World War Veteran."<sup>836</sup> Another review in *The New York Times* called the scene "a dirge-like composition...which is concerned with the veterans of the A.E.F."<sup>837</sup> *The Washington Post* described the scene as simply "a finale of overwhelming pageantry" and "tremendously dramatic."<sup>838</sup> *Variety* analyzed the finale the most deeply. It praised the "rousing, rah-rah finish which, while Cohansque, is timely and patriotic. It's a plea for the army of the unemployed titled "Remember My Forgotten Man." A bang build-up that'll

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<sup>834</sup> "Those Forty-Niners of Broadway," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 18, 1933, X3. For more on the film's mostly laudatory reviews see: Grant, 56; Barrios, *A Song in the Dark*, 377; Bergman, 63-64; Kelly, 154; *Variety* 13 June 1933; "Warren William, Aline MacMahon and Guy Kibee in a Musical Conception of "The Gold Diggers,"" *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 8, 1933, 22; "Gold Diggers of 1933," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), June 17, 1933, 4; "Gold Diggers of 1933," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), June 24, 1933, 4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Leslie Halliwell, contends that "Remember My Forgotten Man," when "divorced from its arresting subject it isn't a very good number at all, despite the insistent throb of its music, and one might think it could have been justified only if collecting boxes had been promptly passed around the theatre in aid of veterans' relief. Needless to say that never happened: all the profits from the picture went straight into Jack L. Warner's bank account." Leslie Halliwell, *Halliwell's Harvest: A Further Choice of Entertainment Movies From the Golden Age* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986), 68.

<sup>835</sup> "Warner Musical Is Continued Another Seven Days at Met," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), June 25, 1933, 22; "That Musical Hit, Like Brook, Seems to Run On and On," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), July 2, 1933, S4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>836</sup> "Warren William, Aline MacMahon and Guy Kibee in a Musical Conception of "The Gold Diggers,"" *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 8, 1933, 22.

<sup>837</sup> "Those Forty-Niners of Broadway," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 18, 1933, X3.

<sup>838</sup> "Gold Diggers of 1933," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), June 17, 1933, 4.

have the American Legion proclaiming paens of endorsement for the flicker.”<sup>839</sup>

Although the finale’s plea to support the Forgotten Man came across to reviewers, at least in the press it did not seem to elicit much public debate. This indicates that the reviewers may have agreed with the scene’s message or did not view it as controversial enough to warrant a deep analysis. Such a reception suggests that the ideals of veteranist-commemorations had truly entered the center of public discourse and reached journalists, audiences, and the teams of Hollywood filmmakers who shaped popular cinema.

These Hollywood teams were especially important because the filmmaking process in the 1930s constituted a collective enterprise in which all parties involved with a film influenced decisions. This included the director and the performers, especially actresses.<sup>840</sup> During the Pre-Code era of *Gold Diggers of 1933*’s production, actresses wielded particular power in Hollywood.<sup>841</sup> As the biggest stars and revenue makers, leading ladies such as Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Mae West, Katherine Hepburn, and Joan Blondell, among others, dominated Hollywood through their sexual appeal and spirited portrayal of women’s issues and stories.<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>839</sup> Review by Variety 6/12/33 as quoted in Pike and Martin, 170. Thus far, I have not yet found any reactions to this film in the American Legion’s magazine around the time of its release.

<sup>840</sup> LaSalle, *Complicated Women*, 2.

<sup>841</sup> LaSalle, *Complicated Women*, 1-3. The Pre-code era usually refers to films made between March 1930 when the Production code censoring films was adopted, and 1934 when it finally began to be enforced. Mark A. Vieira, *Sin In Soft Focus: Pre-Code Hollywood* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 6-8, 17-18. See also: Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>842</sup> LaSalle, *Complicated Women*, 4-9, 77, 118-119, 164. For more on women in film in the 1930s see: Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930-1960* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

An influential and prolific actress in the early 1930s, Joan Blondell may have had enough clout to influence Berkeley's direction of "Remember My Forgotten Man" and ensure that her prostitute character held the moral high ground to safeguard her from criticism for playing a streetwalker.<sup>843</sup> It is possible that Blondell likely agreed with Berkeley's interpretation of the song as an anthem of veteranist-commemorations. Blondell later supported the troops during World War Two. As part of the Hollywood Victory Committee, she performed for servicemen just like her parents did during World War One.<sup>844</sup> She might even have collaborated with Berkeley on her portrayal of the streetwalker as a moral advocate for veterans, although Blondell's biographer speculated that she was modest about her role in the scene's political message. Later in life, Blondell admitted in an interview that she did not remember much about the scene, mostly because of her personal troubles at the time.<sup>845</sup>

Joan Blondell's portrayal of a streetwalker in this scene is highly significant in the context of Pre-Code Hollywood's infatuation with prostitutes.<sup>846</sup> Screen prostitutes abounded before the enforcement of the Code, and were often used to send sympathetic messages and demonstrate that morality and chastity were not always identical. This was true in *Gold Diggers of 1933*, in which the prostitute acted as the

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<sup>843</sup> LaSalle, *Complicated Women*, 135. For more on Joan Blondell see: Kennedy, *Joan Blondell: A Life Between Takes*; Joan Blondell, *Center Door Fancy* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1972). Although it is a novel, *Center Door Fancy* seems to be loosely based on Blondell's own life.

<sup>844</sup> Sheila Graham, "Joan Blondell, a GOOD MOTHER, Is Welcomed Home From War Work," *The Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia), May 30, 1943, pg. 5D.

<sup>845</sup> Kennedy, *Joan Blondell: A Life Between Takes*, 56-57.

<sup>846</sup> LaSalle, *Complicated Women*, 87-96. For more on fallen women and prostitutes in 1930s film see: Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

scene's heroine and moral compass.<sup>847</sup> As the voice of reason, Blondell's prostitute inverted social norms in a Brechtian manner. She demonstrated the government's immoral treatment of veterans and strengthened the scene's anti-war, pro-peace message, one not so dissimilar to that in Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*.<sup>848</sup>

Etta Moten, Blondell's African-American counterpart in the finale, may also have influenced the political and racial messages in the scene. A renowned performer adored by black and white audiences, Moten publicly advocated for civil rights throughout her life and openly discussed racial issues. She sang at an anti-lynching event in 1935, and in her later years she lectured about African American and African heritage.<sup>849</sup> Civil rights supporter Eleanor Roosevelt even invited her to sing "Remember My Forgotten Man" at FDR's birthday party in 1934. This event made Moten the first African-American woman to sing at the White House and proved the centrality of this song to American public discourse in the early 1930s.<sup>850</sup> In 1934,

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<sup>847</sup> LaSalle, *Complicated Women*, 91-94

<sup>848</sup> "Mother Courage and Her Children" was staged in New York in 1935. Giovacchini, 25-26. For more on Bertholt Brecht see: Glynn Wickham, *A History of the Theatre* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1992), 232-233; James K. Lyon, *Bertholt Brecht in America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980); W. B. Worthen, *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* (Boston, Massachusetts: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004); 709-737.

<sup>849</sup> "Etta Moten, Four Other Women To Get B'nai B'rith Achievement Award," *The Chicago Defender*, 21 Nov 1959, pg. 15, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "South Hath Charm For Miss Etta Moten: Conditions Different Than What She Expected To Find," *New Journal and Guide*, 14 Nov 1936, pg. 15, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Etta Moten Is Well Received In Knoxville: No Discrimination In Use Of Hall Shown," *The Chicago Defender*, 25 Mar 1939, pg. 14, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Ruthe Winegarten, ed., *Black Texas Women: A Sourcebook* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 114-115; "Church Activities of Interest in the City," *The New York Times*, 5 Jan 1935, pg. 18, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>850</sup> Traci Parker, "Guide to the Etta Moten Barnett Papers, University of Chicago," <<http://mts.lib.uchicago.edu/collections/findingaids/index.php?eadid=MTS.barnett>> (21 November 2014); "Kansas City Girl Guest Singer at White House, *Plaindealer*, 9 Feb 1934, pg. 6, ProQuest America's Historical Newspapers, African-American Newspapers; "RKO Officials Say Etta Moten is Credit, *Plaindealer*, 23 Feb 1934, pg. 6, ProQuest America's Historical Newspapers, African-American Newspapers.



soon after this performance, Moten married the founder of the Associated Negro Press. In 1946, she declared that Hollywood should make African-American artists “part of the great American scene.”<sup>851</sup> A newspaper interview with Moten even stated that she had “engineered” herself into her part in *Gold Diggers of 1933*.<sup>852</sup> Aware of the symbolic power of her brief role, perhaps she collaborated with Berkeley to visually include African-Americans in the scene’s message to demonstrate that they too were Forgotten Men and Forgotten Women who struggled during the Depression.

Like Blondell and Moten, the biographies of the Warner Brothers production team that created the film provide more evidence of its political implications, even though neither Mervyn LeRoy nor Busby Berkeley, seems to have publicly discussed the film’s political meaning in much depth.<sup>853</sup> Director Mervyn LeRoy is famous for creating films with a mass appeal and escapist fare but he is also remembered for his liberal films that promoted social and political messages.<sup>854</sup> He directed another Forgotten Man film, 1932’s *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* that told the story of

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<sup>851</sup> Parker; Billy Rowe, “It’s Up to the Actors to Change Hollywood,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* 15 Jun 1946, pg. 23, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>852</sup> Fay Jackson, “Kansas City Girl Starred in 1933 Gold Diggers,” *Plaindealer*, 7 Jul 1933, pg. 5, ProQuest America’s Historical Newspapers, African-American Newspapers

<sup>853</sup> For example, in his autobiography, LeRoy says little of substance about “Gold Diggers of 1933” and only mentions it in connection with his onetime girlfriend Ginger Rogers and the lavish nature of the film’s production values. Mervyn LeRoy, *Mervyn LeRoy: Take One* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc. 1974), 119. In an interview discussing his films, Berkeley stated that “We were content to write original stories with original musical scores, and embellish them with unusually daring and spectacular musical numbers—and the audiences loved them. It took their minds off the troubles and worries of the day;” from: Bob Pike and Dave Martin, *The Genius of Busby Berkeley* (Reseda, CA: Creative Film Society, 1973), 15. For more on Busby Berkeley see: Spivak, *Buzz: The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley*; Bob Pike and Dave Martin, *The Genius of Busby Berkeley* (Reseda, California: CFS Books, 1973); Thomas and Terry.

<sup>854</sup> William R. Meyer, *Warner Brothers Directors: The Hard-Boiled, the Comic, and the Weepers* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), 223, 229-231; Peter Roffman and Beverly Simpson, “LeRoy, Mervyn,” in *The Political Companion to American Film*, Edited by Gary Crowds (Lakeview Press, 1994), 249; LeRoy, *Mervyn LeRoy: Take One*; George Stevens, Jr., Ed., *Conversations with the Great Moviemakers of Hollywood’s Golden Age at the American Film Institute* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); Thomas Schatz, 140-148; Bergman, 92-96, 120-121; and Babington and Evans, 47-49.

a World War One veteran who hoped for a better future upon his return home, but was mistakenly jailed for a crime he did not commit.<sup>855</sup> The film sent a stinging indictment of the justice system and chain gangs. LeRoy's later film, *They Won't Forget* (1937), probed the historical memory of the Civil War in the 1930s south and criticized southerner's prejudices against northerners and African-Americans. This film also portrayed the justice system and lawyers as corrupt. It highlighted LeRoy's pattern of directing films with critical social and political messages.<sup>856</sup>

One of the screenwriters for *Gold Diggers of 1933*, David Boehm, wrote a play titled *It Happened to Adam* that premiered in London in 1934. Reviewers criticized the play for being crude and vulgar.<sup>857</sup> Boehm defended his script as merely portraying the realities of sex through comedy.<sup>858</sup> This incident reveals that perhaps Boehm held radical or unconventional views for his time and expressed them in his work, as may have been the case in *Gold Diggers of 1933*.

The film's songwriters, Harry Warren and Al Dubin, both served in the military during World War One; Warren in the navy and Dubin in the army.<sup>859</sup> Similar to Berkeley, Warren led musical and dramatic entertainment for sailors stationed at Long Island, while Dubin served with the entertainment unit of the 77<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>855</sup> *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 92 mins., Warner Brothers, 1932, DVD.

<sup>856</sup> *They Won't Forget*, dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 95 mins., Warner Brothers, 1937, DVD.

<sup>857</sup> "Boehm Play Assailed," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 10, 1934, 18.

<sup>858</sup> David Boehm, "Note From Mr. Boehm," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 25, 1934, X3.

<sup>859</sup> Robert Gottlieb and Robert Kimball, eds., *Reading Lyrics* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2000), 128; *On Broadway Songbook: 15 Broadway Favorites* (Alfred Music Publishing, 2007), 46; David Ewen, *Great Men of American Popular Song* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 314-320; Mark Robinson, *The World of Musicals: An Encyclopedia of Stage, Screen, and Song*, Vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 198-199; Songwriters Hall of Fame, "Al Dubin," *Songwriters Hall of Fame Virtual Museum*, n.d. < <http://www.songwritershalloffame.org/exhibits/C68> > (21 November 2014).

Division in France.<sup>860</sup> Before the war, Dubin contributed lyrics to the 1916 pro-neutrality song “The Hero of the European War” which lauded President Wilson for keeping the U.S. out of war. He also collaborated on patriotic songs such as “Your Country Needs You Now” (1917). His lyrics embraced contemporary political opinions.<sup>861</sup> Warren and Dubin are best remembered today for writing the songs included in the 1980 Broadway version of *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, loosely based on the original *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1933) film, the predecessor of *Gold Diggers of 1933*. This Broadway production included some songs from *Gold Diggers of 1933* and their other films, but “Remember My Forgotten Man” was omitted.<sup>862</sup> Like other modern Broadway musicals that evoke the nostalgia of interwar musical theatre, most of *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*’s songs were removed from their original context in the films they were written for. This deprived them of the political power they initially yielded and obscured the memory of Warren and Dubin’s politically powerful movie music.<sup>863</sup>

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<sup>860</sup> Ewen, 315-317.

<sup>861</sup> Al Dubin, Rennie Cormack, and George B. McConnell, “Your Country Needs You Now,” *The Library of Congress*, 1917 <<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200200609/>> (21 November 2014); Al Dubin, George B. McConnell, and Jos. A. Burke, “The Hero of the European War,” *The Library of Congress*, 1916 <<http://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.100004413/>> (21 November 2014).

<sup>862</sup> Together, Warren and Dubin wrote numerous songs that have become part of the Great American Songbook, many of which were written specially for the Berkeley dance musicals of the 1930s. William Zinsser, *Easy To Remember: The Great American Songwriters and Their Songs* (Jaffrey, New Hampshire: David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., 2000), 137-143. The Broadway League, “42<sup>nd</sup> Street,” *Internet Broadway Database* n.d. <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=3963>> (21 November 2014); The Broadway League “42<sup>nd</sup> Street,” *Internet Broadway Database* n.d. <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=12864>> (21 November 2014). *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* was revived on Broadway in 2001.

<sup>863</sup> Other Broadway shows that combine popular music of the 1920s-1940s into a new plot include *Crazy for You* and *Nice Work if You Can Get It*. The Broadway League, “Nice Work If You Can Get It,” *Internet Broadway Database*, n.d. <<http://www.ibdb.com/show.php?id=491373>> (21 November 2014); The Broadway League, “Crazy for You,” n.d. <<http://www.ibdb.com/show.php?id=2807>> (21 November 2014).

Most importantly, Busby Berkeley, who directed and choreographed “Remember My Forgotten Man,” was also a World War One veteran and admitted his personal connection to the scene’s message during a 1963 interview. When asked why the scene was used as a “downbeat finale” for the film, Berkeley explained that “it was a spectacle type of number and a good one to use in those dark days of the depression, when many people had forgotten the guys who had gone to war for our country. I am a great sentimentalist at heart, so I thought it good to use.”<sup>864</sup> This demonstrates that Berkeley directed the number to send the audience and the government a message that the World War veterans were being treated poorly and deserved assistance. Perhaps he did not elaborate on his connection to the Army or his support of veterans because of the anti-military climate of the Vietnam era at the time of the interview.

Berkeley’s pro-veteran political message in “Remember My Forgotten Man” makes sense given his pattern of infusing political and moral commentary into his films. Although Berkeley is popularly remembered for his lavish and often vapid musical numbers filled with scantily-clad chorus girls, his larger body of cinematic work tells another story. As a director and choreographer, Berkeley often used his films to make politically radical messages, especially in his non-musicals. In 1939 he directed *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939), a film that presented the police as inept, the law as irrational, and lawyers as corrupt. It showed how the police could make a wrong judgment and implied that it is sometimes better to be a good person than to

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<sup>864</sup> Quoted in Pike and Martin, 68.

obey the law.<sup>865</sup> *She Had to Say Yes* (1933), which he co-directed with George Amy and was released in July 1933, not long after *Gold Diggers of 1933*, included a scathing indictment of American businesses and their immoral male leaders.<sup>866</sup> It depicted a company that used its female employees to entice potential customers and improve revenue during the economic downturn. Blatantly sexual, it included three instances of unwanted sexual advances that could be perceived as attempted rapes. It openly criticized the loss of morality in the quest for money. Although Berkeley was not an outspoken member of the radical, leftist popular front active in the 1930s, his films indicate that he was influenced by the movement.<sup>867</sup> Like the artists of the popular front, his films portrayed the labor of performers, used mass culture to depict ordinary working-class Americans, sent messages about morality, and criticized the corruption of the government.<sup>868</sup> Read against Berkeley's other films, it can be inferred that Berkeley directed "Remember My Forgotten Man" to make a political statement that boldly criticized the U.S. justice system's treatment of veterans.

Berkeley's own status as a veteran and his military experiences had a profound effect on his life, especially his success as a choreographer and director. In his youth, he attended the Mohegan Lake Military Academy. He enlisted in the Army just one day before the U.S. entered the First World War and requested officer's training and a position in the artillery to get overseas quickly.<sup>869</sup> In France, Berkeley

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<sup>865</sup> *They Made Me A Criminal*, dir. Busby Berkeley, 92 mins, Warner Brothers, 1939, DVD; Spivak, 159-163.

<sup>866</sup> American Film Institute, "She Had to Say Yes," *AFI: Catalog of Feature Films*, n.d <<http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=5805>> (29 December 2014); Spivak, 82

<sup>867</sup> Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1998), xv-xvii.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid.

<sup>869</sup> Spivak, 19.

trained under French officers on the 75mm and 15mm howitzers and received his commission as a second Lieutenant in the 312<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery of the 79<sup>th</sup> Division. He conducted parade drills with American soldiers and developed widely admired trick drills and innovative routines that involved thousands of men marching in complicated patterns. Eager to get to the front lines, Berkeley requested training as an aerial observer, but the war ended before he got into combat. These experiences are reflected in his choreographic style and his aerial shots; they are understood to be the origins of his famous “Berkeleyesque” style.<sup>870</sup> He stayed in Europe on occupation duty and helped develop entertainment for American troops as the Assistant Entertainment Officer in Coblenz, Germany for the U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of Occupation. Berkeley gathered soldiers who were performers in civilian life and directed and sometimes performed in touring shows for the troops until he secured passage home as a ship’s entertainment officer. Back in New York, he entered the theatre as a performer and then as a dance director, building off of his wartime entertainment work.<sup>871</sup>

Berkeley’s experiences in the First World War are extremely significant for his direction of “Remember My Forgotten Man.” As a veteran of the war, Berkeley could identify with the struggles of other World War One veterans, even if he did not share their plight. He might have been somewhat patriotic based on his decision to volunteer for the Army before the U.S. officially entered the war, and because of his attempts to gain a combat position. This patriotism came across in many of his films,

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<sup>870</sup> Schatz, 150; Spivak, 18-26.

<sup>871</sup> Thomas and Terry, 18-20; Pike and Martin, 132-133; and Spivak, 13-27.

such as *Babes in Arms* (1939) with its finale titled “God’s Country,” and *Strike Up the Band* (1940), which ended with an image of Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland raising an American flag. Both scenes probably aimed to increase American patriotism as World War Two broke out in Europe.<sup>872</sup> In *Footlight Parade* (1933), released in October 1933 just after *Gold Diggers of 1933*, the sailors and chorus girls in the finale, “Shanghai Lil,” created an image of the U.S. flag and FDR’s face from banners filmed from overhead. They then formed the shape of the NRA eagle from which the sailors fired shots to defeat the Great Depression. This vignette formed an obvious message of support for FDR’s New Deal and an attempt to revise patriotism in American audiences.<sup>873</sup> The inscription on Berkeley’s headstone in the Desert Memorial Park cemetery in Cathedral City, California omits any reference to his successful film career and only states: “Busby Berkeley: 2d Lt U.S. Army World War I” (figure 6.2).<sup>874</sup> Berkeley seems to have been proud of his wartime experiences which might have made him sympathize with the Forgotten Man and the Bonus March.

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<sup>872</sup> *The Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland Collection: Babes in Arms*, dir. Busby Berkeley, 120 mins., MGM, 1939; *The Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland Collection: Strike Up the Band*, dir. Busby Berkeley, 120 mins., MGM, 1940, DVD.

<sup>873</sup> *The Busby Berkeley Collection: Footlight Parade*, dir. Lloyd Bacon, 104 mins. Warner Brothers, 1933

<sup>874</sup> Find a Grave, “Busby Berkeley,” *Find a Grave*, 1 Jan. 2001 <<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=1326&PIpi=76765>> (31 October 2014); Palm Springs Cemetery District, “About Us: History,” *Palm Springs Cemetery District*, n.d. <<http://www.pscemetery.com/>> (31 October 2014).



Figure 6.2: Busby Berkeley's grave at the Desert Memorial Park Cemetery, Cathedral City, CA. Photography by Arthur Koykka from: <<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=1326>>

The First World War appeared in many of Berkeley's films in various forms; these films demonstrated his fascination with his experiences 'over there.' His later film, *For Me and My Gal* (1942), told the story of a vaudeville couple during World War One, played by Judy Garland and Gene Kelly.<sup>875</sup> It touched on the tragedies of the war, the cowardice of draft-dodging, and the real meaning of heroism. Significantly, Garland's character shamed Kelly's character when he tried to dodge the draft, and she went to war first as a uniformed YMCA entertainer in France. Although the cut of Garland's uniform skirt resembled the contemporary World War Two WAAC uniform more than the YMCA uniforms used in World War One—possibly to highlight women's contributions to the current war—Berkeley presented women as active uniformed participants in World War One, even though he omitted them from the veterans portrayed in "Remember My Forgotten Man." As shown in

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<sup>875</sup> *For Me and My Gal*, dir. Busby Berkeley, 104 mins., Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1932, DVD.



chapter five, during World War Two, the memory of women's World War One service was re-appropriated to support the current war effort. Nonetheless, through this film Berkeley still reminded audiences of the sacrifices of the First World War and women's roles supporting veterans upon their return home.

In *Gold Diggers of 1937* (1936), Berkeley's dance direction of Warren and Dubin's musical number "All's Fair in Love and War" brought World War One to life through his choreography.<sup>876</sup> Berkeley directed the scene to present an anti-war message that parodied warfare through comedy and romance. Chorus girls dressed in Doughboy helmets waved white flags of peace and danced in martial marching formations as they feminized war through a mock battle. As the lyrics proclaimed that "love is just like war," Berkeley's choreography told viewers to make love and not war. An entrenched group of chorus girls dressed as Doughboys stationed next to "no man's land" flirted with male soldiers next to "no woman's land" and waged a battle across the trenches with perfume gas attacks. The mock battle ended when the trenches moved together and the men and women kissed. By poking fun at his distinctive choreographic style, Berkeley portrayed war as ridiculous as his own dance numbers. He appropriated the visual tropes of the First World War to show the futility and senselessness of war and to send the audience a politically radical anti-war message that supported the recent Neutrality Acts.

"Remember My Forgotten Man," and many of Berkeley's other film projects, constitute living memorials to World War One.<sup>877</sup> As a cinematic living memorial,

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<sup>876</sup> *Gold Diggers of 1937* on *The Busby Berkeley Collection: Volume 2*, dir. Lloyd Bacon, 101 mins., Warner Brothers Pictures, 1936, DVD.

<sup>877</sup> In analyzing the *Forgotten Man* films of the 1930s, Michael Hammond places them in the context of the contentious commemorative culture at the time. He explains that the 1930s "laid the foundations

this scene in particular represented a trenchant rejection of empty monumentalist rhetoric. Berkeley's theatrical career was launched because of his wartime service and his distinctive choreographic style originated in World War One. Berkeley owed his success to his experiences in France and his choreography was the direct result of his aerial training and the parade drills he developed for the AEF.<sup>878</sup> The many military marches featured in his films, his overhead shots that used his aerial observation skills, and his formations of chorus girls in intricate patterns were all products of World War One and were linked to its memory. Berkeley often referenced the war, either symbolically through his militaristic choreography or through the subject matter of his movies. The performers in his films can even be understood as embodying the memory of the war in their performances. Berkeley used the bodies of his performers to create images that emerged from the war and represented its memory onscreen. Much like the Colonial Dames uniforms exhibit where the human form retained by the uniforms operated as a memorial rooted in the corporeality of women veterans, Berkeley used his performers' bodies to construct a cinematic living memorial.

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for the cultural commemoration of the returning veteran in the United States. Tensions between modern and traditional efforts to imagine the veterans' experience during and after the war generally played out across art and literature and were often divided along the lines of elite and popular forms. The returning veteran was an embodiment of those competing discourses, each seeing to make sense of the war. At times of commemoration the veteran was a 'relic' of the past to be honored and feted but during periods of social unrest the veteran became an unwelcome reminder of the war's cost and a threat to the social order, a forgotten man." Michael Hammond, "War Relic and Forgotten Man: Richard Barthelmess as Celluloid Veteran in Hollywood 1922-1933," *Journal of War & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (November 2013): 282-301, 283.

<sup>878</sup> Dickstein also notes that Berkeley's choreography was likely also inspired by the stylized expressionist films of the 1920s and that he learned from the work of the same German expressionist filmmakers as Leni Riefenstahl. Dickstein, 82-83, 234-235.

As a living memorial to World War One, “Remember My Forgotten Man” iconized and celebrated the path-breaking role of the women who rejected older and more rhetorical forms of commemoration. It memorialized the Forgotten Man by compelling citizens and the government to support veterans through relief. The scene implicitly scorned statuary memorials and asserted that they were not helpful without projects that aided veterans. Nonetheless, the scene’s omission of women veterans among the ranks of the Forgotten Man demonstrated that during the 1930s, women were rarely included in the public discourse about veteran politics, and would not be better included until World War Two.

### *Conclusion*

“Remember My Forgotten Man” reflected the powerful impact that female veteranist-commemorators had made on American commemorative culture by 1933. It portrayed onscreen what women were doing in real life: honoring veterans through advocacy and aid while working towards a more peaceful future. The scene endorsed the efforts of female veteranist-commemorators as a positive alternative to the construction of statuary memorials, even though it took a more politically divisive stance in support of the Bonus March than these women. The scene’s exclusion of female veterans from the ranks of the Forgotten Man indicated the pervasiveness of women’s continued marginalization from the category of veterans in interwar

America, and the weakening of the collective memory of women's wartime service.<sup>879</sup>

"Remember My Forgotten Man" contextualized female veteranist-commemorators within the social and political disillusionment of the 1930s. As the women and veterans in the scene begged for help, they displayed the anger at the government manifested most dramatically in the 1932 Bonus March. The scene's jarring images of the First World War and the nation's treatment of veterans depicted the distaste for war and internationalism stimulated by isolationism and the peace movement throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and put into action by the Nye Committee and the Neutrality Acts.

African-American singer Etta Moten's cameo in the scene alluded to and encapsulated the challenges faced by African-American women as they attempted to participate in veteranist-commemorations. These African-American women made race impossible to ignore. By representing the plight of an African-American woman at all, Berkeley reminded viewers that African-Americans also served in the war and that these veterans and their families now suffered just like white Americans. Berkeley's inclusion of Moten and his subtle suggestion that her character collaborated with Blondell's character allowed African-American women more agency than they were actually given by most female veteranist-commemorators. But by featuring Moten after Blondell, and by showing Moten alone in each shot, Berkeley still marginalized and segregated Moten in some of the same ways that white female veteranist-commemorators segregated their organizations and

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<sup>879</sup> Roddick, 11-12; Kahana, "The Forgotten Man; or, How Hollywood Invented Welfare," 94-95.

memorialization projects.<sup>880</sup> Moten's vignette demonstrated how despite the segregation of the interwar commemorative culture, differing opinions among veteranist-commemorators about race and African-American women's own attempts to join their ranks made it increasingly difficult to fully exclude African-American women.<sup>881</sup>

This film captured the complex ways that interwar female veteranist-commemorators looked beyond memorials and monuments to remember America's Forgotten Men and Forgotten Women from the Great War. It portrayed the anger that some Americans like Berkeley and many female veteranist-commemorators felt about the uselessness of the numerous statuary memorials erected to memorialize this conflict. After experiencing the effects of war and facing the challenges of the Great Depression, these women focused their commemorative efforts on promoting peace and helping veterans. Although the permanent physical evidence of their commemorative efforts may be scarce today, their impact on interwar America cannot be underestimated, for out of the ashes of battle they helped veterans and worked for collective peace. As the U.S. entered another world war in 1941, the experiences of female veteranist-commemorators during the First World War and their involvement with postwar commemorations continued to inspire them. WOSL member

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<sup>880</sup> The segregation of these organizations is in line with the practices of other women's organization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as the Women's Relief Corps, the YWCA, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The American Legion also segregated its chapters. Francesca Morgan, *Woman and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, 12, 118; Christopher Courtney Nehls, "A Grand and Glorious Feeling:" The American Legion and American Nationalism between the World Wars," PhD. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2007, 8-9.

<sup>881</sup> Whalan asserts that after the war some African-American women even tried to carve out their own niche in the New Negro "manhood movement," suggesting African-American women's increasing refusal to be subordinated by either race or gender. Whalan, 147-164. For more on how African-Americans approached the racist interwar commemorative culture see: Whalan, 191-240. For more on how African-American supported the war effort see Morgan, 117-125.

Representative Edith Nourse Rogers spearheaded the GI Bill to ensure that veterans would be honored through substantive aid. Rogers also created the Women's Army Corps so that women would have expanded opportunities to serve in the military and would be discharged as officially recognized veterans.

## **Conclusion: The Nationalization of Veteranist- Commemorations**

When the United States went to war with Europe in 1941, female veteranist-commemorators once again dedicated themselves to supporting the war effort. During the intervening years of peace, they never ceased the service they began for their country during the First World War. They continued their mission of veteranist-commemorations during the Second World War by shifting their focus to the new war effort, even while they remained committed to memorializing the First World War and helping its veterans and their families.

Throughout the country, many of the women who served and sacrificed in the First World War re-mobilized to support the war effort in any way they could. Service work in support of the war filled the halls of American Red Cross' Memorial Building to the Women of the World War. The women's uniforms in the Colonial Dames uniforms collection briefly left the Smithsonian's storage areas to help *The Saturday Evening Post* connect the uniformed women from the First World War to those in the Second World War. Films like *For Me and My Gal* reminded Americans of women's past support of the military and inspired them to take up the torch of service again. A cartoon drawn by George Price that the WOSL collected comically sums up the commitment of the World War One women to supporting the new war effort (figure 7.1). It shows an old woman, presumably a former Salvation Army 'Donut Dolly,' in a battered uniform coat who is serving donuts to a group of eager

young service men as two bewildered young servicewomen looked on. The caption read: “a short refresher course and she was ready for action again.”<sup>882</sup>



Figure 7.1: George Price’s cartoon that depicted a WWI “Donut Dolly” going back to work during WWII. Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

Perhaps the most significant legacy of the female veteranist-commemorators of the First World War, and their biggest impact on World War Two veterans, came in the form of the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill. As the Ranking Minority Member of the House of Representatives’ World War Veterans Legislation Committee, WOSL member Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (R-MA) played a key role in sponsoring the G.I. Bill. Male World War One

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<sup>882</sup> Folder: WOSL History Project, Box: WOSL-National History Projects, Service Projects, Rosters, 2, Women’s Overseas Service League Collection, National WWI Museum Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.; Glenn Collins, “George Price 93, Cartoonist of Oddities, Dies,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 14, 1995 < <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/14/obituaries/george-price-93-cartoonist-of-oddities-dies.html> > (31 December 2014). This cartoon most likely appeared in *The New Yorker*, where most of Price’s cartoons were published.



veterans joined her, including Representative John Rankin (D-MS), the chairman of the World War Veterans Legislation Committee, and Senator J. Bennett “Champ” Clark (D-MO), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee’s Subcommittee on World War Veterans Legislation, and a founder of the American Legion.<sup>883</sup> Although Nourse’ role in creating the G.I. Bill and her First World War Service are sometimes overlooked or underemphasized, Rogers’ biographical details and her status as a nationally prominent female veteranist-commemorator are highly significant.<sup>884</sup> After her World War One service in France and England with the YMCA and the Red Cross as a nurse, Rogers worked at Walter Reed army hospital with the Red Cross for several years. In 1922, President Harding appointed her as his personal representative to supervise the care given to disabled veterans, a position that Presidents Coolidge and Hoover later reappointed her to, even after her election to the House of Representatives in 1925.<sup>885</sup>

As a female veteranist-commemorator, Rogers’ leadership in the development of the G.I. Bill indicated that perhaps this legislation constituted a form of memorialization in line with the veteranist-commemorations pioneered during the

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<sup>883</sup> Wasniewski, 73-74; Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *The G.I. Bill: A New Deal for Veterans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 62-63; Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1996), 29, 91, 115-117.

<sup>884</sup> Altschuler and Blumin as well as Bennett include Rogers in their history of the G. I. Bill’s creation but many other studies do not include her, or overlook her and her WWI service, even though she is seen in the famous photos of FDR signing the bill. Such studies include: Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* and Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and G.I. Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, Edward Humes, *Over Here: How the G.I. Bill Transformed the American Dream* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2006); Milton Greenberg, *The GI Bill: The Law That Changed America* (New York: Lickle Publishing, Inc., 1997); Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Kathleen J. Frydl, *The G.I. Bill* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>885</sup> Katherine Gray Kraft, “Rogers, Edith Nourse, 1881-1960. Papers, 1854-1961: A Finding Aid,” *Harvard University Library*, 1974 < <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch00294> > (8 Feb 2015).

interwar era by Rogers and her associates. The G.I. Bill provided unprecedented benefits to male and female veterans of the Second World War, although in practice it did not always apply equally to women, African-Americans, and other minorities.<sup>886</sup> Among other things, the bill provided veterans with hospitalization and rehabilitation benefits; educational benefits; loans to purchase homes, farms, and businesses; job counseling and help finding employment; and readjustment allowances for unemployed veterans.<sup>887</sup> Signed into law by FDR on June 22, 1944 as Representative Rogers looked on, the G.I. Bill aimed to create an effective and fair system to assist returning veterans as they reintegrated into American society (figure 7.2). Conceived of by World War One veterans, this legislation tried to prevent a repeat of the government's often disastrous interactions with World War One veterans during the interwar years. As historian Jennifer Keene argued, the G.I. Bill can be considered "the final legacy of World War I to the nation"<sup>888</sup> Having learned from their own experiences, the men and women of the World War One generation chose to memorialize the new generation of veterans through legislation that required the government to take responsibility for the welfare of veterans.

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<sup>886</sup> For an analysis of race and gender discrimination in relation to the G.I. Bill, see: Altschuler and Blumin, 118-147, Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-century America* (New York: Norton, 2005).

<sup>887</sup> 58 Stat. 284 1940-1945, Hein Online;

<sup>888</sup> Keene, 205



Figure 7.2: FDR signs the G.I. Bill in the Oval Office with (l to r) Bennett “Champ” Clark, J. Hardin Peterson, John Ranking, Paul Cunningham, Edith N. Rogers, J.M. Sullivan, Walter George, Robert Wagner, (unknown), and Alben Barkley. Note that Rogers, leaning down towards FDR with great interest, is the only women in this June 22, 1944 image. FDR Library Photo Collection, NPx 64-269.

The passage of this bill suggests that female veteranist-commemorators and their allies had fueled the anger at the uselessness of statuary memorials that had increased during and after the Second World War, as more Americans turned away from traditional monuments and towards living memorials in the wake of the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, and new urban development.<sup>889</sup> Perhaps the G.I. Bill served as the U.S.’s first national memorial to the Second World War and can help explain why it took until 2004 to erect the National World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. In fact, when asked if they had followed the process of this memorial’s creation, and if they thought it should have been erected earlier, many Word War Two veterans who visited this memorial during a 2013 Honor Flight trip responded that immediately

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<sup>889</sup> Shanken, “Planning Memory: Living Memorials in the United States during World War II,” 144-145.

after the war they were so focused on rebuilding their lives using the benefits from the G.I. Bill, that they did not pay attention to the lack of a memorial in their honor until their later years.<sup>890</sup>

The G.I. Bill publicly sanctioned female veteranist-commemorators' belief that veterans who return from war need and deserve certain types of assistance. It asserted that supporting veterans constitutes a form of commemoration that should take precedence over the creation of statuary memorials. The bill provided veterans with some of the services that female veteranist-commemorators had deemed essential to their welfare during the interwar period, such as hospitalization and rehabilitation benefits, and unemployment aid. When the government failed to provide these benefits to veterans in the past, especially to women veterans, female veteranist-commemorators took it upon themselves to deliver these services. It is no coincidence that a well-known WOSL member like Edith Nourse Rogers spearheaded the G.I. Bill, as the legislation adhered to the WOSL's beliefs and legitimized the activities they had pursued since their inception. Influenced by her participation in the WOSL, through the G.I. Bill, Rogers achieved the nationalization of the veteranist-commemoration movement spearheaded by the WOSL and other female veteranist-commemorators who served in World War One.

By passing the G.I. Bill, Congress and President Roosevelt demonstrated that they had heeded Busby Berkeley's call to "Remember My Forgotten Man" and they publicly declared that the government would try to prevent the creation of another

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<sup>890</sup> During Honor Flight San Diego's trip to Washington D.C. on October 19, 2013, with my supervision, Elliot Fitall, a student in my History 208 class, interviewed fourteen of the World War II veterans on the trip. His analysis of these interviews came from his final paper. Elliot Fitall, "The World War II Memorial," History 208 Final Paper, The University of Maryland, College Park, 2013.

generation of Forgotten Men. Although female veteranist-commemorators did not achieve a clear victory over statuary memorials amidst the complicated interwar commemorative culture, the 1944 passage of the G.I. Bill, with a WOSL member at the helm, demonstrated that they exerted a strong influence on American society, politics, and culture. The influence of these female veteranist-commemorators continues to resonate today through later iterations of the G.I. Bill that have helped subsequent generations of American veterans. These bills have legally identified veterans as a special class of citizens who have earned specific rights and benefits because of their military service.<sup>891</sup>

During World War Two, the female veteranist-commemorators of World War One also reached out to the next generation of women in the armed forces. They viewed these women as following in their footsteps and continuing their legacy. Their own wartime experiences and postwar struggles provided them with insights about how to improve women's relationship with the armed forces. They tried to create conditions and policies for women during the Second World War that gave them the benefits denied to many women of their own generation.

Representative Edith Nourse Rogers made the plight of service women in the Second World War her other personal mission. She originally introduced the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Act in Congress on May 28, 1941, before the U.S. entered World War Two, citing her own service in World War One, and the service of other women like her, as the inspiration for the bill. Rogers justified the creation of

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<sup>891</sup> For more on the impact of later versions of the G.I. Bill on subsequent generations of veterans, see: Mark Boulton, *Failing Our Veterans: The G.I. Bill and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) by explaining how many women wanted to serve their country but could not do so without compensation. She specifically noted the struggles many World War One women had faced without official military rank or veteran status. She hoped to rectify these problems with her bill.<sup>892</sup> Echoing the work of the WOSL, who she noted, endorsed her bill, Rogers even told the Senate Committee on Military Affairs how "I have seen women who have been overseas, who have been injured over there, and they are not allowed even hospitalization by the Government. It is very tragic."<sup>893</sup> WOSL member Helen Douglas Mankin, then a member of the Georgia Legislature, testified to the House Committee on Military Affairs and presented a fiery defense of the Act. She explained why she, Rogers, and the WOSL hoped that women would be granted full and equal military status.<sup>894</sup>

When the WAAC Act finally became law on May 14, 1942, it created the WAAC as the only women's organization, besides the Army Nurse Corps, authorized to serve with the Army, but it did not make the WAAC part of the actual army, despite the efforts of Rogers and the WOSL. The Act did not grant women in the WAAC military status on an equal basis to men, or provide them with veteran status. Although Rogers had wanted it to grant veteran status to women, she encountered resistance from some male members of Congress.<sup>895</sup> Following the passage of the

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<sup>892</sup> "Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representative, Seventy-Seventh Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, on H.R. 6293," Jan. 21-22, 1942, pg. 6, ProQuest Legislative Insight.

<sup>893</sup> "Hearing Before the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-Seventh Congress, Second Session, on S.R. 2240," Feb. 6, 1942, Pg. 10, "ProQuest Legislative Insight.

<sup>894</sup> "Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representative, Seventy-Seventh Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, on H.R. 6293," pg. 40-46.

<sup>895</sup> Bettie J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978* (Washington D.C.: The Center of Military History, 1990), 3-5; Matthew A. Wasniewski, ed., "Edith Nourse Rogers," *Women in Congress, 1917-2006* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 72-74; Evelyn M. Monahan and

WAAC Act, on July 21, 1942, Public Law 689 created the Women's Naval Reserve, known as the WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service) and also allowed women to join the Marine Corps Reserve and the Coast Guard Reserve.<sup>896</sup>

Unyielding in her efforts, Rogers continued to argue that women should hold official army rank and receive veterans' benefits. In 1943, she introduced the Women's Army Corps (WAC) Act into Congress to create the Women's Army Corps as part of the regular army instead of as an auxiliary like the WAAC.<sup>897</sup> The passage of the WAC Act finally granted women military rank and veteran status. Directly inspired by her own service in the Great War and the community of women veterans she belonged to, Nourse created the opportunities for women's military service and veterans' benefits that female veteranist-commemorators had been fighting to obtain since World War One. It was not until Nourse's success with the establishment of the WAC during World War Two that American women were considered official veterans by the government and gained all the benefits that entailed. Rogers and her compatriots from World War One opened the door for American women to officially serve in the armed forces.

Even after Edith Nourse Rogers secured these victories for World War Two servicewomen, women who served during the First World War still fought for the

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Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee, *A Few Good Women: America's Military Women From World War I to the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 16-19; 56 Stat. 283, ProQuest Legislative Insight; "Congressional Record, House, March 17, 1942: Women's Army Auxiliary Corps," pg. 2580-2608, ProQuest Legislative Insight; Mattie E. Treadwell, *United State Army in World War II, Special Studies: The Women's Army Corps* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), 24-28.

<sup>896</sup> Monahan and Neidel-Greenlee, 40-44.

<sup>897</sup> Morden 12; Wasniewski, 74; 57 Stat. 371, Hein Online.

recognition and benefits they believed they deserved. Most famously, the ‘Hello Girls,’ who served as telephone operators with the Army’s Signal Corps in France, pursued a prolonged battle to obtain veterans’ benefits.<sup>898</sup> They finally achieved official army status from Congress and the Department of Defense in 1979. By that time, the ‘Hello Girls’ were in their eighties or nineties; many had passed away and did not live to see their work officially recognized as military service.

After World War Two, the women who served and sacrificed in the First World War continued to try to insert their contributions into the historical and commemorative narrative of the war. They achieved two notable victories, one in Kansas City, Missouri, and the other at Arlington National Cemetery. During the 1956 WOSL National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, the Liberty Memorial dedicated a new three-part mural by artist Daniel MacMorris. The mural decorated the south wall of Memory Hall, a structure at the memorial intended to be used as a meeting room for patriotic organizations. It also contains memorial plaques that honor the men and women from Kansas City who died in World War One.<sup>899</sup>

Entitled “Women in War,” this mural depicted the diverse ways that American women supported the First World War. Although it focused on the First World War, MacMorris intended it to be universal in its depictions of women’s war work, and he wanted it to be applicable to women’s World War Two service. The largest section of the mural hangs in the center and includes the caption: “Steadfast beside us women of

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<sup>898</sup> Raines, *Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps*, 170, 204; Zeiger, 172-173.

<sup>899</sup> “Elements of the Liberty Memorial,” *National WWI Museum*, n.d. <<https://theworldwar.org/explore/museum-and-memorial/elements-liberty-memorial>> (6 Feb 2015); “Private Events,” *National WWI Museum*, n.d <<https://theworldwar.org/visit/meetings-and-event-rentals/private-events>> (6 Feb 2015); Donovan, 108-109.



World War I, God's gentle angels who bound our wounds and healed our troubled spirits.”<sup>900</sup> In the center of this painting, MacMorris depicted the “Angel of Mercy,” a veiled woman with massive golden wings who holds a lit torch in one hand and the Caduceus, the symbol of medicine in the other. She stands in a prominent place near the top of the painting in a pose reminiscent of the Madonna della Pietà. She looks down on a group composed mostly of female nurses and other women volunteers, many in veils, who nurse injured soldiers (figure 7.3). The right portion of the mural honored Blue Star Women, women whose children served in the war and survived. It is captioned: “hope like a Blue Star kept mother's faith alive,” and depicts the patriotic return of several service members to their mothers and families, as an angel watches from above (figure 7.4). The left portion of the mural honored Gold Star mothers. Captioned: “blood and mother's tears given for a star of gold,” it shows a grieving Gold Star mother being comforted by a priest as an angel hovers in the background above a large headstone and the figure of death. Although Gold Star widows are not mentioned in the caption, the painting includes a younger woman with her two children who may represent Gold Star widows (figure 7.5).

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<sup>900</sup> Ron Grandon, “Mural To Be Dedicated Honors Service Women,” *The Kansas City Times*, Jul. 9, 1956, pg. 1F, 3F; “Their Service is Cited,” possibly from *The Kansas City Times*, both found in unlabeled binders of Liberty Memorial Association News clippings, National WWI Museum Archive, Kansas City, Missouri.

James J. Heiman, *Voices in Bronze and Stone: Kansas City's World War I Monuments and Memorials* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star Books, 2013), 9; Donovan, 102-108.



Figure 7.3: “Women in War” mural, center section, by Daniel MacMorris inside Memory Hall at the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial. August 2012. Photograph courtesy of the National WWI Museum.



Figure 7.4: “Blue Star Mothers,” the right part of the “Women in War” mural by Daniel MacMorris inside Memory Hall at the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial. August 2012. Photograph courtesy of the National WWI Museum.



Figure 7.5: “Gold Star Mothers,” the left section of the “Women in War” mural by Daniel MacMorris inside Memory Hall at the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial. August 2012. Photograph courtesy of the National WWI Museum.

During the dedication ceremony, WOSL women marched in their wartime uniforms. They were accompanied by female veterans of World War Two, a full-dress Honor Guard from the Marine Corps Reserve, and First World War Medal of Honor recipients John Barkley and M. Waldo Hatler. In his speech at the ceremony, Kansas City Mayor William E. Kemp professed that “the hall would not be complete...without something to call to mind through the years to come the part that women played in the great wars to preserve freedom in the world.”<sup>901</sup> Thirty-eight years after the Armistice, women had finally gained a permanent place in one of the most prominent stateside memorials to America’s participation in the First World War.

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<sup>901</sup> “Their Service is Cited.”

At Arlington National Cemetery on October 20, 1997, another memorial opened that honored, in part, the memory of America's World War One women. The "Women in Military Service for America Memorial" honors the services of all American women who have supported and served in the military, from the American Revolution to the present day (figure 7.6).<sup>902</sup> It is considered a living memorial because the non-profit foundation that created the memorial, the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, manages and curates exhibits that are displayed inside the memorial. They also operate an archive that supports the study of American women's military service.<sup>903</sup> In attendance at the memorial's dedication, in her World War One uniform, was Frieda Hardin, a 101 year-old veteran of the Navy Yeoman (F).<sup>904</sup> In a speech at the ceremony, former Yeoman Third Class Hardin told the audience that in her 101 years of life, she had "observed many wonderful achievements—but none as important or as meaningful to the progress of women in taking their rightful place in society." She added that "for my part, I have always been very proud of my Navy service."<sup>905</sup> Alongside several generations of women who supported the military, Hardin helped inscribe her service and the service of her comrades into the landscape of military memory at Arlington National Cemetery (figure 7.7).

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<sup>902</sup> Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, "History," *Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation*, n.d.

<<http://www.womensmemorial.org/About/history.html>> (31 December 2014)

<sup>903</sup> Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught, "President's Welcome," *Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*, n.d. <<http://www.womensmemorial.org/About/welcome.html>> (7 February 2015).

<sup>904</sup> "The Register," Summer 1998, pg. 6, Box: Women's Memorial Foundation Newsletters, "The Register", WIMSA History Collection, Women's Memorial Foundation Archive.

<sup>905</sup> Wilma L. Vaught, *The Day the Nation Said "Thanks!": A History and Dedication Scrapbook of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial* (Washington D.C.: Military Women's Press, 1999), 98-99.





Figure 7.6: The Women in Military Service for America Memorial (WIMSA) at Arlington National Cemetery, (foreground) visible underneath Arlington House (background). Inside the memorial are exhibits about the history of American women's military service. February 2015. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.



Figure 7.7: Former Yeoman (F) Third Class Frieda Hardin (center) waves to the crowd after her speech at the dedication ceremony for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial on October 18, 1997 at Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia. Her son, Captain Jerald Kristen, USNR (Ret) stands on her left and Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret), the President of the Women in Military Service for American Memorial Foundation, Inc. stands on her right. Courtesy of the Women's Memorial Foundation.

Women's veteranist-commemorations did not stop with the generation of women from the First World War. Veteranist-commemorations have continued over the years and expanded to embrace more men and a wider range of Americans beyond the military community. The Honor Flight program represents a well-known example of the growth of veteranist-commemorations. The Honor Flight Network consists of regional "hubs" across the U.S. that raise money to take veterans of World War Two, the Korean War, and Vietnam on a free trip to the Washington D.C. memorials that honor their military service. As a non-profit organization, Honor Flight is run almost entirely by grassroots volunteers. Since its inception in 2005, it has grown into a nationally known organization that brings together aging veterans and their families, local communities, younger veterans, active-duty military personnel, and major companies for a philanthropic cause. Community service forms the core of the program, which resembles a pilgrimage not unlike the Gold Star pilgrimages, except that it is directly funded by citizens rather than the government. By combining community service to veterans with a trip to the monuments in Washington D.C., Honor Flight continues the tradition of veteranist-commemorations. The program brings life to the much criticized and somewhat sterile design of the National World War II Memorial when it fills the site with veterans, who often interact and share their stories with the many schoolchildren and tourists at the memorial (figures 7.8 and 7.9).<sup>906</sup>

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<sup>906</sup> The author learned this information from participating in Honor Flights for four years starting in 2011. For more about the criticisms of the National World War II Memorial's design see: Shanken, "Planning Memory: Living Memorials in the United States during World War II," 144-145. See also: "Honor Flight," *Honor Flight*, n.d. < <https://www.honorflight.org/> > (7 Feb 2015).



Figure 7.8: During an Honor Flight San Diego trip, World War II Army Air Corps veteran Morton Gollin speaks to visiting schoolchildren about his experiences as a German POW while sitting at the National World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. May 25, 2013. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.



Figure 7.9: John and Beverly Rougas, both World War II veterans who served in the Marine Corps, stand with two current Marines at the Iwo Jima Memorial during Honor Flight San Diego's trip to Washington D.C. May 3, 2014. Photograph by Allison S. Finkelstein.

Many women today still remain at the forefront of veteranist-commemorations, especially women who have served and sacrificed for the nation. One such woman is Captain Jenna C. Grassbaugh, an army officer, a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a Gold Star widow. After the death of her husband, Captain Jonathan D. Grassbaugh, by a roadside bomb while he served in Iraq on April 7, 2007, Grassbaugh contemplated what to do with the insurance money she received upon his death. She did not feel right spending it on ordinary purchases. Grassbaugh wanted to find a way to use the money to serve another needy population other than the survivors of fallen soldiers like herself, for whom aid groups have increased in recent years.

As a law student at The Ohio State University several years later, Grassbaugh decided to use the money to create The Jonathan D. Grassbaugh Veterans Project at Ohio State's Moritz College of Law to provide free legal assistance to Ohio veterans.<sup>907</sup> In an oral interview, she explained that she hoped this project "would have John's name and sort of bear his legacy in that regard, but would also serve another purpose, something that would have been, I think, something that he would have believed in too." Grassbaugh did not think she ever assumed that commemoration could only be done through stone statues or memorials. She even got a tattoo in honor of her husband that she calls a 'memorial tattoo,' transforming her own body into what might be the purest form of a living memorial. As she reflected on her experiences, Grassbaugh said that a lot of people in her position, or people who

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<sup>907</sup> "Grassbaugh Veterans Project," *Moritz College of Law: Grassbaugh Veterans Project*, n.d. <<http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/grassbaugh/>> (8 Feb 2015).



just want to help others like her, “recognize there are lots of ways to commemorate and to memorialize these individuals, and if you can do it with something more than just a monument that people go look at, it’s almost better because...if it’s something that, where other people are receiving a benefit, you think... that maybe some good can come of some bad.” In 2014, Captain Grassbaugh’s words echoed the sentiments of her female predecessors from the First World War and demonstrated a present-day iteration of the veteranist-commemorations that they championed during the interwar period.<sup>908</sup>

Women’s efforts to equally serve in the military and obtain veteran’s benefits continue today as the U.S. emerges from two wars in which women played a larger role than ever both on and off the battlefield, a distinction that became more difficult to define during these conflicts. In 2013, the military lifted the ban on women in combat. Military leaders are now struggling to determine how to integrate women into the combat positions newly available to them.<sup>909</sup> These new frontiers for women’s military service will require women to advocate for themselves in novel ways as they seek to enter occupations previously barred to females. With the issue of military sexual trauma against women also in the national spotlight, female service members’ struggles to gain compensation and healthcare for these issues from the

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<sup>908</sup> Captain Jenna C. Grassbaugh. Interview by the author, August 11, 2014, telephone conversation, College Park, MD; Moritz College of Law, “Grassbaugh Veterans Project,” *The Ohio State University: Moritz College of Law*, n.d. < <http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/grassbaugh/> > (31 December 2014).

<sup>909</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, “Pentagon is Set to Lift Combat Ban for Women,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 23 2013 < [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/pentagon-says-it-is-lifting-ban-on-women-in-combat.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/pentagon-says-it-is-lifting-ban-on-women-in-combat.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) > (31 December 2014). Additionally, the U.S. Marine Corps announced in April 2012 that for the first time women will be allowed to attend infantry school. James K. Sanborn, “USMC 4-Star: Women to Attend Infantry School,” *Marine Corps Times*, April 18, 2012 <<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2012/04/marine-corps-women-infantry-combat-dunford-amos-041812/>> (30 September 2012).

Department of Veterans Affairs have recently been exposed.<sup>910</sup> The fight for women's equal treatment in the military, and women's equal recognition as veterans, continues long after the battles waged by the women of the First World War. Exposing the history of female World War One veterans, and the history of how women supported the military from within and outside of the armed forces, can hopefully help shed light on these issues as they are grappled with today.

After the First World War, an eclectic group of American women who believed that they had served and sacrificed during that conflict pursued veteranist-commemorations as a way to help male and female veterans, their local communities, and their nation. They believed that their wartime services and sacrifices endowed them with a duty to 'carry on' their wartime work. They defined community service and advocacy as a form of commemoration and often preferred these activities to more traditional commemorative rites such as stone statues and monuments. All female veteranist-commemorators did not completely reject traditional statuary memorials, but they often saw veteranist-commemorations as more useful and they sometimes even combined them with statuary memorials. Although these women did not secure a decisive victory for veteranist-commemorations over statuary memorials, they impacted and shifted the commemorative discourse of the interwar period. They suggested that monuments should not be the de facto way to memorialize wars. Through their suggestion of an alternative to physical monuments, they crafted a

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<sup>910</sup> Emily Wax-Thobodeaux, "Female Veterans Battling PTSD From Sexual Trauma Fight for Redress," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 26, 2014 < [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/female-veterans-battling-ptsd-from-sexual-trauma-fight-for-redress/2014/12/25/f2f22d8e-7b07-11e4-b821-503cc7efed9e\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/female-veterans-battling-ptsd-from-sexual-trauma-fight-for-redress/2014/12/25/f2f22d8e-7b07-11e4-b821-503cc7efed9e_story.html) > (31 December 2014).

cultural legacy that persists until the present, even though it is often overlooked and sometimes forgotten.

By continuing their wartime service through veteranist-commemorations, female veteranist-commemorators reminded the nation that they too had contributed to the war effort and fulfilled the duties of martial citizenship even before they could all vote or equally enter the military. They defined women's wartime contributions broadly and demonstrated how women impacted the military and served their country from inside and beyond the official branches of the armed forces. Through their commemorations of women's wartime service and their struggles to include that service in the commemorative and historical narrative of America's participation in the Great War, they pushed for women to gain the full rights of citizenship beyond the vote. They hoped that the next generation of wartime women would have more equal opportunities to contribute to America's national defense and would be treated as veterans.

Because women's veteranist-commemorations were created through the acts of service they performed, most of the evidence of women's intensive memorialization of the First World War was intangible and ephemeral from the start. The majority of this evidence no longer exists on the landscape. It has been almost deleted from the history of American commemorative culture in the interwar period. While the First Division Memorial still stands in Washington D.C. near the Memorial Building to the Women of the World War, the women who led service projects inside that structure, and the members of the American War Mothers who sold carnations there, are no longer around to testify to their commemorative service programs. In the

years since its creation, that Memorial Building no longer houses the service activities it was created to shelter, and it has lost much of its service mission. In France, monuments to the AEF tower over the trench scarred landscape filled with the American graves still maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission. But without the Gold Star rest houses, nothing physically remains at these cemeteries to teach visitors about the Gold Star Pilgrimages and women's extraordinary impact on American military commemoration, both overseas and in the U.S.

By recovering the history of women's veteranist-commemorations, this dissertation has restored the legacy of these women's contributions to the historical narrative and demonstrated the innovative and selfless ways they pursued commemoration. As the Centennial of the U.S.'s entrance into the First World War approaches in 2017, this story can help convince Americans, often oblivious to the importance of the First World War, that this conflict had a profound impact on the nation. It also can inform the leaders of today's memorialization projects about a form of commemoration that placed people in the center of the spotlight rather than politics or money. The hybrid forms of interwar veteranist-commemorations that included both memorial rites and service work could help these leaders find a better balance between the two and understand that they do not have to be exclusive of each other. While President Obama's 2016 budget included a proposed appropriation of \$168.8 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, the government's United States World War One Centennial Commission is forbidden from receiving federal appropriations,

making it difficult for the nation to properly commemorate the Centennial.<sup>911</sup> This may indicate that balance between supporting veterans and commemorating the military has deteriorated in recent years.

As leaders grapple with the frustrations stemming from the lack of space for new memorials on the National Mall, and contested projects such as the Eisenhower memorial and the proposed National World War One Memorial at Pershing Park, they could learn a lesson from these women who yearned to help others in their commemorations. In a nation reeling from over a decade of war, and with a new generation of struggling male and female veterans and an ever-growing civil-military divide, such a lesson could provide a commemorative alternative that could help with healing. If the female commemorators of the interwar period were alive today, they would surely not be wasting their time arguing about the merits of a memorial's design or location. They would be at the new Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, helping disabled veterans of Iraq or Afghanistan. Or, they would be lobbying Congress with female veterans who have suffered from military sexual trauma. Perhaps they would pursue efforts to promote peace and remind us that all wars are inherently ineffective, costly, and inefficient ways to solve problems. With so much work to be done to help those who have suffered while guarding the nation, these women would be the first to remind us that serving others is one of the best ways to commemorate those who have defended the freedom of the United States.

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<sup>911</sup> "Annual Budget Submission," *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Office of Budget* 3 Feb 2015 <<http://www.va.gov/budget/products.asp>> (8 Feb 2015); "The United States World War One Centennial Commission: About," *The United States World War One Centennial Commission*, 2015 <<http://worldwar-1centennial.org/index.php/about/the-world-war-onecentennial-commission.html>> (9 Feb 2015).

## Excursus A: Shot-by-Shot Scene Analysis of “Remember My Forgotten Man”

A shot-by-shot scene analysis of “Remember My Forgotten Man” reveals the subtle and explicit symbolic details that align the scene with veteranist-commemorations. Consideration of the scene’s plot and characters highlights its connections with the ideas promoted by female veteranist-commemorators. This analysis uncovers yet another interpretation of this famous scene that has yet to be considered by scholars.

As the finale of *Gold Diggers of 1933*, “Remember My Forgotten Man” began after the resolution of the film’s main plot. ‘The show-within-a-show’ can finally go on and the curtain opens on a proscenium arch stage that contains a set of a city street.<sup>912</sup> Joan Blondell walks out of an apartment building, evocatively dressed as a prostitute in a tight, low-cut shirt and form-fitting skirt.<sup>913</sup> She approaches a man trying to light a cigarette butt he picked up off the ground, soliciting her trade as an act of sympathy since she knows the man cannot pay. She has an expression of compassion on her face as she tries to help him light the cigarette with her own, taking his wrist and sensually placing the cigarette from her mouth into his mouth. This gesture symbolized the solicitation that marked her as the sexual aggressor forced into prostitution by the Great Depression. As the man walks away, she leans against a street lamp and launches into her monologue, the song “Remember My Forgotten Man,” which she speak-sings.

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<sup>912</sup> *The Busby Berkeley Collection: Gold Diggers of 1933*.

<sup>913</sup> The following sources accept the interpretation of Blondell’s character in this scene as a streetwalker: Kelly, *Cinema and the Great War*, 154; Barrios, *A Song in the Dark*, 377 LaSalle, 190; Rubin, 75-76; Babington and Evans, 64; Grant, 62.

She first addresses the questionable character of the man she just shared a smoke with. As music plays in the background, she tells the audience: “I don’t know if he deserves a bit of sympathy. Forget your sympathy, that’s all right with me. I was satisfied to drift along from day to day, ‘till they came and took my man away.” By admitting the failings of the Forgotten Man, Blondell connected the Forgotten Man’s plight to hers. She explained how she was somewhat satisfied until “they,” meaning the government, took him away from her. This is the first implication that the government abandoned veterans and that that scene intended to send a message to the government.<sup>914</sup>

In the next verse, Blondell tells the audience that when government first took her man, it was to fight in World War One:

Remember my forgotten man,  
You put a rifle in his hand,  
You sent him far away,  
You shouted: “Hip-hooray!”  
But look at him today.

This stanza recalled the war’s empty patriotism when American soldiers were treated as heroes. It warned against false patriotic gestures and hollow support for the troops. This line, and Berkeley’s interpretation of it, indicated that as veterans themselves, Warren, Dubin, and Berkeley may have disliked patriotism and memorials that did not help veterans. They may have preferred veteranist-commemorations because they actually impacted veterans’ lives. This verse defined the Forgotten Man as a male war veteran tossed aside by the government he served. This line also alluded to the recent 1932 Bonus March. It urged the audience to sympathize with the Forgotten Man and

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<sup>914</sup> LaSalle, 190.

the Bonus March, in contrast to many female veteranist-commemorators who did not necessarily endorse the Bonus March, at least publicly. This verse also excluded female veterans from the scene's visual portrayal of forgotten veterans, despite the existence of these women, their needs, and the efforts of female veteranist-commemorators to publicize their plight.

As the camera zooms in on Blondell's face during the next verse, she turns to the suffering of rural Americans during the Great Depression. She equates the Forgotten Man with downtrodden American farmers, especially those in the west who dealt with the drought that began from 1930 to 1932.<sup>915</sup>

Remember my forgotten man,  
You had him cultivate the land.  
He walked behind the plow,  
The sweat fell from his brow,  
But look at him right now.

As a farmer, the Forgotten Man worked the land to feed the U.S. and other parts of the world, but his efforts increased the severity of the drought and the Depression because he overworked the soil. His devotion to duty led to his current turmoil. The song asserted that it was the government who urged him to over-cultivate the land to increase production during World War One and now abandoned him as the west stood on the verge of the Dust Bowl, unbeknownst to the farmer.<sup>916</sup>

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<sup>915</sup>A serious drought affected the Great Plains starting in 1931 and led to the Dust Bowl. Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 10-11; Paul S. Boyer. Clifford E. Clark, Jr., Sandra McNair Hawley, Joseph E. Kett, Neal Salisbury, Harvard Sitkoff, Nancy Woloch, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People, Volume Two: From 1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 515; George B. Tindall, David E. Shi, Thomas Lee Percy, *The Essential America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 461.

<sup>916</sup> Although it simplifies some of the contributing factors, some scholars assert that the government contributed to the causes of the Dust Bowl through poor land management. See: *The Enduring Vision*, 361. For a more detailed explanation of the causes of the Dust Bow see: R. Douglas Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 17-31.



Blondell then laments how the fate of American women was tied to the  
Forgotten Man:

And once, he used to love me,  
I was happy then.  
He used to take care of me,  
Won't you bring him back again?

'Cause ever since the world began,  
A woman's got to have a man.  
Forgetting him, you see,  
Means you're forgetting me,  
Like my forgotten man.

Before the Great Depression, women and families were supported by men who were now unable to act as the traditional breadwinner. With this conservative view of gender relations, the song suggested that by forgetting these men, the government also forgot American women and families. By arguing that “a woman’s got to have a man,” the song promoted a traditional conception of femininity and family life. It implied that without male support, women were forced to transgress traditional gender roles to earn money to return to the conservative norm. This demonstrated how women were forgotten by the government when they abandoned veterans. It also ruled out the possibility that women veterans could be a family’s breadwinner.

As the scene continues, the orchestra music crescendos and African-American singer Etta Moten begins to sing the verses Blondell just spoke. These two women collaborate across racial lines, linked by Moten’s vocal narration. The camera cuts to a shot of a Forgotten Man walking down the street with his head down in shame, and then pans up to an image of Moten, alone and separated from the white women. She begins to sing as she sits in the apartment window, briefly making this African-American woman the voice of the Forgotten Man, despite visually segregating her

from the white women in the scene.<sup>917</sup> Although African-Americans were absent from most of the film, for this short moment they were included in its narrative of the Great Depression and World War One.<sup>918</sup> This segment further infused the film with a radical political agenda that seemed to partially include African-Americans in the ranks of the Forgotten Man through Moten's character. The scene showed white women and African-American women cooperating despite segregation to support veterans in ways that many female veteranist-commemorators rarely encouraged and often tried to prevent.

As Moten continues singing, Berkeley pans the camera to focus on another white woman who holds a baby in her arms and stares despondently out the window.<sup>919</sup> This image resembles the portrait photographs taken by Dorothea Lange during the Great Depression, especially the famous 1936 "Migrant Mother" image (figure 8.1).<sup>920</sup> Although this photograph was taken after the film's production, it presented the same messages as Berkeley's cinematic images of the physical and emotional toll the Great Depression took on American women.<sup>921</sup> The camera then pans down to a forlorn old white woman in a rocking chair, another image that

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<sup>917</sup> Spivak, 76, 80, 335.

<sup>918</sup> African-Americans appear only one other time in the film, when an African-American couple is briefly shown during "Pettin' in the Park." For more on African-Americans in Hollywood films see: Donald Bogle, *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dream: The Story of Black Hollywood* (New York: One World Books, 2005); Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973); and Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>919</sup> For more on Dorothea Lange see: Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>920</sup> Gordon, xii; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Staff, "Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother' Photographs in the Farm Security Administration Collection: An Overview," *The Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Reading Room*, 2004  
<[http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128\\_migm.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html)> (31 October 2014).

<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

resembles Lange's photographs. Even though it is unlikely that Lange's photographs influenced or inspired this tableau—many of them were produced after 1933—the similarities between the images evoke an analogous interpretation of the human toll of the Great Depression. These images all urged the viewer to sympathize with suffering Americans, especially women.<sup>922</sup>

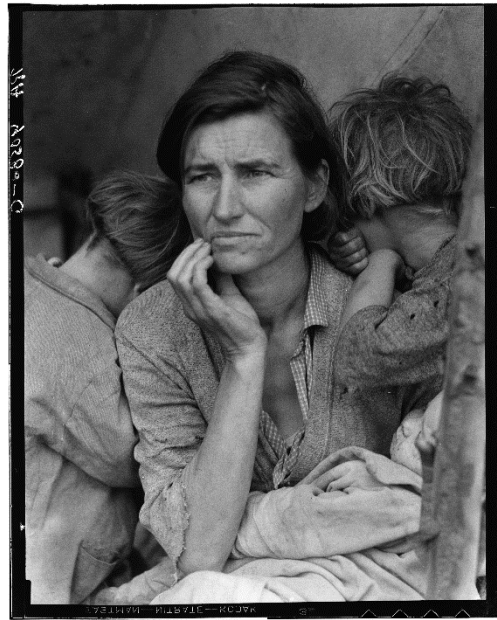


Figure 8.1: “Migrant Mother” or “Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California.” Dorothea Lange. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8b29516>>

As Moten continues singing, the camera cuts back to Blondell, who is leaning on the street lamp. She sees another Forgotten Man slumped against the wall, either drunk or sleeping. A cop wakes him with his stick and grabs him to try to get him to move. Blondell watches the cop manhandling him and intervenes. She pulls open the

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<sup>922</sup> However, Lange did produce photographs capturing the personal side of the Great Depression in 1932 and 1933. Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits*, 103, 116, 117. <sup>922</sup> My interpretation of the similarities between Lange and Berkeley disagrees with Morris Dickstein, who describes them as opposites. Dickstein, 360.

inside of the man's jacket and reveals what appears to be the French Croix de Guerre pinned to the fabric. Before Blondell angrily moves the Forgotten Man away from the cop, Berkeley zooms in on the medal so it is visible to the audience, many of whom probably would have known that it was awarded by the French military for valor in battle during the First World War. This medal indicated that this Forgotten Man was a war hero, while the policeman symbolized the unjust treatment of these heroes by the government, especially during the Bonus March. This interlude boldly criticized the government's treatment of veterans. As he did in several of his other films, Berkeley used his art to promote the social and political causes he cared about.

After this brief interlude with the police, the scene continues during a flashback as the curtains of the stage part to reveal a group of Doughboys marching in formation against cheering, flag-waving crowds. The Doughboys march on mechanized moving walkways which seem to move them in a way that is unstoppable, perhaps to symbolize the unceasing futility of trench warfare. From overhead, Berkeley shows the soldiers being separated from the cheering crowds, creating a nostalgic portrayal of American's empty support for the war and the troops.

The curtains open on the next segment and we see the Doughboys in France, seamlessly continuing their march in the rain as they energetically head to their first taste of battle. Another line of soldiers enters from the opposite direction on a mechanized walkway. They have come from the front lines and they provide a visual contrast to the newly arrived Doughboys. As rain pours and the music becomes more staccato, these seasoned troops limp along, their faces bandaged and their heads down, no longer marching in unison. Wounded soldiers are carried on stretchers and

the camera zooms in on their ashen and sorrowful faces, the blood that drips from their wounds, their bandaged eyes, and their torn uniforms. The men in this scene have become the objects of the subjective gaze, an inversion of the male gaze that Berkeley famously used to showcase his beautiful chorus girls. In subverting the male gaze, Berkeley made men the victims in this story and depicted women as the heroes who supported them. This cinematic inversion signaled that women were the focus of the scene while men were relegated to the roles of chorus girls. Most interwar films about World War One centered on masculine stories without many female characters. They featured male soldiers as the anti-war voice of reason, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) and *The Big Parade* (1925). In contrast, in this scene, Berkeley gave this role to women. He built on the messages of these anti-war films, but broke with them by adding women as key players. His interpretation is more similar to German filmmaker Ernst Lubitsch's *Broken Lullaby* (1932), in which the fiancé of a dead German soldier is the story's hero. She sacrificed her own happiness to heal the pain caused to her fiancé's parents when the French soldier who killed him arrives. This similarity indicates there may have been international elements to Berkeley's use of women as the mouthpieces for an anti-war message.

The vignette of marching, battle-scarred soldiers also resembled John Singer Sargent's 1919 painting "Gassed" (figure 8.2).<sup>923</sup> In Sargent's painting, blindfolded soldiers with gas wounds to their eyes stand in line, each holding the shoulder of the man in front of him as they try to walk amidst wounded soldiers sprawled out on the

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<sup>923</sup> The Imperial War Museum, "'Gassed,'" *The Imperial War Museum Collections*, n.d. <<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23722>> (31 October 2014).

ground.<sup>924</sup> Whether or not Berkeley found inspiration in Sargent's painting or his own experiences with the AEF in France, his cinematic representation of these wounded soldiers evokes sympathy from the audience. This segment of the scene reminded audiences of the sacrifices of the Forgotten Man and the harsh realities of war, buoying its antiwar message.



Figure 8.2: *Gassed* by John Singer Sargent, 1919. Imperial War Museum. ©IWM (Art.IWM ART1460) <<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23722>>

After another blackout and opening of the curtains, the scene shifts forward again in time to the Great Depression. The lines of the marching men continue, but now the men are receiving food in a breadline. This transition infers that these destitute men are the soldiers just shown. With bleak facial expressions, most of the men keep their eyes to the ground in shame at their situation. Once again, Berkeley

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<sup>924</sup> Ibid.

moves the camera to focus on their individual faces, re-appropriating his male gaze shot to show these men's despair. A cigarette is passed around, and as the men stay silent, the women remain the voice of these veterans when they begin to sing in chorus, starting with "Oh, bring them back."<sup>925</sup>

A new stage set composed of three levels of arches is revealed; each arch contains marching men in Doughboy uniforms as the group of Forgotten Men from the breadline marches underneath the arches toward the viewer. The arched set is in the same shape as the three-arch rainbow patch of the AEF's 42<sup>nd</sup> Division. This division became nicknamed the "Rainbow Division" during World War One because it was a composite division formed from twenty-six National Guard units from across the country.<sup>926</sup> The arches represented the Forgotten Man in the past as he served his country, and the impoverished men marching through the arches represented the Forgotten Man during the present-day Great Depression.

As these Depression-era Forgotten Men march toward a large staircase, more of their comrades join them from the wings. Now, the men finally begin to sing along with the women. The female chorus stands on the sides of the stairs with their arms lifted outward and upward toward the men. The men's lyrics from the first few verses and proclaim:

We are the real forgotten men.  
Who have to lead this life again.

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<sup>925</sup> Spivak, 77.

<sup>926</sup> Special thanks to Dr. David M. Finkelstein for pointing out the reference to the Rainbow Division in this set during one of our many afternoons watching old movies on TCM when I was in high school. For information on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and its insignia during WWI see: Robert J. Dalessandro and Michael G. Knapp, *Organization and Insignia of the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1923* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2008), 200-203. I have not yet found any descriptions of the set as a symbol of the Rainbow Divisions elsewhere. The set is described by Tony Thomas and Jim Terry as "a huge half-wheel contraption" and by Barry Keith Grant as an "impressive German Expressionist set with three arches." Thomas and Terry, 61; Grant, 63.

We sauntered forth to fight,  
For glory was our pride,  
But somehow glory died.  
Remember your forgotten men.  
You've got to let us live again.  
We came, we marched away,  
To fight for USA,  
But where are we today?<sup>927</sup>

These lyrics erased any doubts that the song depicted the perceived injustices endured by the Bonus Marchers and the Forgotten Men. The women surround the men and sing in between and under the men's verses, with Blondell leading refrains of: "Oh, bring them back," and "Now they're just a memory, Oh, bring them back, we want them back."<sup>928</sup> She takes the central focus again as she repeats the refrain of the "And once he used to love me" verse. The Forgotten Men kneel down in a circle around her as she clasps her hands and pleads on their behalf. As she reaches her arms to the sky, the camera cuts to the dozens of women who also encircle her; they lift up their arms as they cry for help for their Forgotten Men. An aerial shot captures Blondell and the ensemble that surrounds her before cutting back to her face as Berkeley moves the camera backwards on its tracks to reveal the entire scene (see figure 6.1).

A blackout ends the play and the film with this powerful message that advocated for male veterans and their female relatives. The blackout signaled the end of President's Herbert Hoover's administration and the hopeful beginning of FDR's administration. This closing vignette revealed the layers of contemporary American history being enacted onstage: World War One, the Forgotten Men, the Bonus March, and the Great Depression. This in-depth excursus of the scene reveals its implicit

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<sup>927</sup> Spivak, 77-78.

<sup>928</sup> Spivak, 80. Blondell's singing was most likely dubbed.



endorsement of veteranist-commemorations and its connection to the ideals  
championed by female veteranist-commemorators during the interwar period.

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