

Dakota Datebook Stories: The Great War

A chronicle of North Dakota's involvement in World War I

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War Declared

April 6, 2017

Since August of 1914, war clouds had hung over Europe. Although the United States had remained neutral, a declaration of war was not unexpected. With Congressional approval only a day away, the headline of *The Williston Graphic* prophesied in bold letters, “Into World’s War.”

On this date in 1917, the House voted 373 to 50 in favor of war; the vote was 82 to 6 in the senate. The *Graphic* declared that the people of Williston were ready to take their place in the war effort and fraternal organizations in the city were lined up in full support. Pacifists circulating petitions for peace were met with open hostility as patriotism ran high. To show their patriotic support, the Williston German Club disbanded.

In Minot, the young women of the city organized a Minot Girls Military Squad. Plans were made for a patriotic concert in Riverside Park to rally the community behind the war effort with a theme of “Wake Up America.” Across North Dakota farmers pledged their cooperation to raise huge crops to feed an army. Local Red Cross units were organized. The National Guard filled its ranks with new recruits in anticipation of being called into service. Flags were flying and patriotic speeches filled the air.

In Pembina, F W. Wardwell, the 72-year-old editor of *The Pioneer Express*, penned a somber editorial on war. As a young man at the beginning of the Civil War, he recalled the nonchalant attitude of the public to the war, but with Union defeats at the outset that prolonged the war, the horrors became a reality for which the public was unprepared. He wrote, “We are at war. And yet we neither see nor hear war. We are at war. Have you realized what this means to you and yours?”

It is hard to think that with all this bright sunshine, with workers and businessmen going on as usual, that we are about entering into the gates of hell, that fathers, brothers, sons and lovers may soon be weltering in blood on the fields of carnage... We are at war. If by some chance the war cloud should pass away, then we as a whole would never realize we had been at war...It takes blood to make people understand what war means and what war is. We do not recognize the war demon until he comes near enough to see his red garment. ... Are you prepared for the necessary sacrifices?”

Back in Williston, *the Graphic* carried the name of Dick Burns, a local young man who died at the front. North Dakota was at war.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

“Patriotism Runs High In Williston”, *The Williston Graphic*, April 5, 1917

“War Time”, *The Pioneer Express*, April 13, 1917.

Early Moments of the War

April 26, 2017

Only two weeks after the Declaration of War, the military machine was progressing quickly. The prospect of raising an all-volunteer army was unrealistic, so Congress was expected to pass a draft bill by the end of April. However, North Dakotans had been quick to answer the call.

Towns such as Edgeley were doing their part. With an area population of less than one thousand to draw from, eighteen young men had already joined up. The community of Taylor in Stark County saw five young men leave for the service. Minot anticipated sending fifteen candidates to officer training school at Fort Snelling.

Women's clubs in the state were organizing programs in food and energy preservation as well as Red Cross activities. Suffrage advocates such as Elizabeth Prescott Anderson were advocating certified registration of women for service to the government. They were to participate in programs designed to eliminate waste and increase food from North Dakota resources. Patriotism was running high, and anti-American conduct was not tolerated. John Van Warner of Minnesota, a member of the International Workers of the World, was arrested, tried and sentenced to thirty days in jail for jeering at two Jamestown men for wearing the Stars and Stripes on their lapels. The IWW had come out against the war, and news reports characterized Warner as an agitator.

During these early moments of the war, the news from the front still talked of British advances, with changes in the front lines measured in miles instead of yards. Many believed that the war could not go on much longer. Louis Dawson from Williston, who had crossed into Canada and joined the allies early on, wrote home that they were engaging in more work duties than in fighting, and that it was the opinion of the allied forces that the Germans were beaten. His casual confidence became even more apparent as he noted that the English tobacco was unacceptable, saying "If you want to help the allies, go out and buy me a can of Prince Albert and send it posthaste."

But in the month preceding the declaration of war, the Germans had retreated to the Hindenburg Line with its series of fortified bunkers and trenches. This trench warfare, bolstered with rapid-fire rifles and machine guns changed the face of the war. In a letter written six weeks later, after being wounded in the Battle for Vinny Ridge, Pvt. Dawson no longer saw an imminent collapse of the German Army, despite the fact that the U. S. had declared war. Like the American public, he too was beginning to visualize a prolonged conflict when he penned, "There is a big scrap ahead yet."

By Jim Davis

Sources:

"Edgeley, N.D. is Doing Her Bit for Government", *Grand Forks Herald*, April 26, 1917 p1.

"Club Women of State to Launch Move" *The Bismarck Tribune*, April 26, 1917 page 2.

"Williston Miner Killed at Front", *The Williston Graphic*, April 5, 1917 page 1

"Louis Dawson Fighting in War Shot in Hand in Vinny Ridge Charge Easter Sunday Writes" *The Williston Graphic*, May 31, 1917, Page 1

Roosevelt's Army

May 9, 2017

On this date 100 years ago ... in 1917 ... the effects of the Great War were beginning to become a reality. The Mandan school system discontinued teaching German although many newspapers across the state claimed that we weren't fighting the German people, we are fighting the German government. Communities prepared gardens to supplement the expected shortage of food. At the

Mandan Training School over thirty acres of garden had been planted. Patriotism still ran high and enlistments continued, but mostly in the Navy as the horrors of trench warfare echoed back from the front lines.

North Dakota's adoptive son revealed his plan to add troops to the war efforts. Theodore Roosevelt announced that he had secured an army of 180,000 volunteers coming from all forty-eight states. They were not draft age men or from National Guard members. They were middle-aged men from all walks of life – bankers, merchants, lawyers, doctors, preachers, and clerks. It was assured that all of these men were financially sound and that their deaths would not bring destitution for their families. Roosevelt's recruiting strategy included the idea that only those who could financially afford to die should be eligible for service at the front. He claimed that the units could be on their way to France for extensive training in only six weeks. Believing that a physically sound man of middle life can fight, these recruits ranged from twenty-five to fifty years of age.

But not all of Roosevelt's volunteers were men. Learning through their local newspaper that Roosevelt planned to raise a volunteer army, two young ladies from Velva, North Dakota stated their intention to join the Colonel. Lois Downing and Grace Burton wrote the former President and stated, "We would like to know if you would let us go with your army and run errands for the nurses and do whatever we can to help?" To this Roosevelt responded, "My dear young friends, that's a mighty nice letter of yours and evidently you are two young Americans of the right type, but I don't believe it would be well for you to try and go abroad, even if I am allowed to raise the division. Good luck to you both." With the Draft Bill unpopular in Congress, and a less than adequate rate of enlistments coming in, the attitude of the two young ladies had to have pleased the Colonel. Although many of North Dakota's young women had joined the Nurse Corps or Red Cross, it was the last line of their letter that made it special, for they wrote, "We are both 11 years old and will be through the sixth grade by the middle of May."

By Jim Davis

Sources:

"Colonel Roosevelt Has 180,000 Men" *The Oakes Times* May 10, 1917 p 2

"Drop German at Mandan," *Emmons County Record* May 10, 1917 p 2

"Two 11-Year-Old Velva Girls Would Join Colonel's Army," *The Bismarck Tribune* May 10, 1917 p 2

Reality of War

May 23, 2017

By this date in 1917, America had declared war on Germany, and the registration for the draft was only weeks away. For a number of years, North Dakota families had been anxiously following the war news from Europe, and now many loved ones could soon be in harm's way. Rose Havelock was one who waited for any news from her husband. Fred C. Havelock, originally from Jamestown, had gone to Canada to begin a new job in early 1914.

Shortly after his arrival, war was declared and he joined the first regiment of Canadian forces organized in Edmonton. The unit was named the Princess Patricia's after the daughter of the Duke of Connaught. In the early part of the war the Princess Pats gained international

recognition having seen some of the heaviest fighting at the first and second battles of Ypres, the Battle of Somme, and at Vimy Ridge.

Of the original 1,300 men that went over, only 44 were still in the unit three years later. In a letter home, he told of life at the front. In the second battle of Ypres, his unit held off three massive German attacks in a single day, resulting in the loss of over 6,000 enemy dead and 8,000 wounded. Of his unit, which mustered in 965 men in the morning, only 102 answered the roll that night. The trenches were a surreal world of slimy mud, caustic gas, screaming shrapnel, roaring explosives, and the whine of bullets.

Emil Katz was another who lived in the trenches and witnessed the reality of war – from the other side. Writing to his brother Morris in Minot, he told of his experiences. With trenches only one hundred yards apart in many places, they frequently called out to the enemy but none dared stick their head up. To do so would be fatal. He had not removed his clothes in nine weeks. Sometimes they could sleep seven hours, but the shelling took its toll. He related that the American-made ammunition was superior to the French, and that if it wasn't for the aid of the Americans the war could have been over. He told his brother that as a German soldier he did not have much love for Americans.

With America now at war, Morris Katz, like many Germans in America, agonized over his new-found freedom and his love for his brother who stayed behind to fight for the fatherland. Meanwhile, across the state, Rose Havelock silently prayed for her husband's safe return.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

“Germans Holding Line”, *Minot Daily Optic Reporter*, May 15, 1915

“Gripping story of Trench Life”, *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, September 20, 1915

“Bismarck Man Wounded in War,” *The Bismarck Tribune* May 26, 1915

Memorial Day 1917

May 29, 2017

Today is Memorial Day, a time to honor the heroes who gave their lives to ensure our freedom. It was originally known as Decoration Day, honoring those who fought in the Civil War, but as the ranks of surviving veterans slowly dwindled; the name was changed in 1899 to Memorial Day, honoring the many who had passed on since the end of the war, and also those who died in the Spanish American War.

On this date in 1917, with the Great War in Europe looming over the proceedings, Memorial Day became an even more somber occasion. Europe had been at war for over two years, and, although the United States had not yet sent troops, the horrific conditions on the battlefields were well known. With draft registration day only a week away, the reality hit home that thousands of young men from North Dakota would soon be headed to the battlefields.

Across the state, communities rallied to commemorate Memorial Day as never before, with parades and local embellishments in almost every town and city.

In Hope, the procession to the cemetery was led by the Blabon Star Band and the Fife and Drum Corps, followed by a member of the G.A.R., the Home Guard firing squad, Boys Scouts and school children. Patriotic speeches then ensued at the opera house.

In Fort Yates the pupils of the Agency Boarding School provided a flag salute, and then moved on for events at the Catholic Cemetery. Dr. Aaron Beede delivered the main address where he not only honored the fallen heroes, but he acknowledged the role of those who toiled far from the battlefields. He stated that true patriotism exists equally in the home and fields when each person performs their allotted duties.

In Dunn Center, school children sprinkled Spring Creek with flowers to honor the departed soldiers. In Fargo, lines of automobiles fanned out to decorate the graves of veterans, while in Bismarck, the Sons of Norway declared the patriotism of all Norwegians in North Dakota. In Jamestown, all of the bells in the city tolled for five minutes. In Williston, a squad of Company E of the National Guard fired a salute in honor of all veterans, part of a service conducted at the grave of a fallen hero buried only two weeks prior.

For some on that Memorial Day in 1917, they honored the heroes of the past, but many were dreading the future, and pondering how many loved ones would be added to the rolls of honor for the next Memorial Day.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

“Memorial Day Fittingly Observed at Fort Yates,” *Sioux County Pioneer*, May 31, 1917

“North Dakota Pays Tribute to Hero Dead,” *The Bismarck Tribune*, May 30, 1917

“Memorial Day Is Observed,” *The Hope Pioneer*, May 31, 1917

Draft Registration Day

June 5, 2017

It was a critical day for many young men on this date in 1917. America had entered the War, but it was lacking the manpower to sustain the type of warfare that had evolved in the trenches of Europe. While many believed America’s entrance into the conflict would bring a quick end to the war, the current military strength was not enough. With the enlistment rate inadequate, a draft was initiated.

Each state had a quota based upon population, and North Dakota was expected to register 77,000 men. June 5th was registration day for all men 21 to 30 years of age. There was only one day set aside for registration, and anyone who failed to register would be imprisoned. Those who attempted to falsify answers on the registration form faced a more severe penalty, being sent to a prison camp for training before assignment to the front lines. With Canada already in the war, draft evaders who fled across the border to avoid registration found little sympathy and were quickly arrested and placed in detention camps.

But on this day, patriotism ran high. At 7:00 AM church bells chimed, factory whistles blew and sirens sounded as draft registration got underway. Fargo registered over 1,500 men by mid-afternoon with a final registration of 2,100. Khaki armbands were provided for the 800

registrants in Bismarck who then led a parade when registration ended at 9:00 PM. In Langdon an impromptu patriotic celebration ensued when the marching bands from Milton and Munich joined with a local band. Registrants, Red Cross workers, school children, war veterans, and Highland dancers marched in a parade to the opera house for patriotic speeches.

For some communities in North Dakota, draft registration was a mere formality. In Mott almost every man had already signed up for military service – so much so that the town was forced to abandon its baseball team.

All across the state registration went smoothly. Citizens and noncitizens alike registered. Single and married men of all nationalities and races, and from all occupations, filled out the forms. Even those with physical disabilities were required to register. Exemptions would be determined later.

Nationally, ten million men were registered on that day. So significant was the number that it led the War Department to issue a statement that read in part, “The manhood of the nation volunteered in mass ... it remains but to select the men who are to go to the front.”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Courier Democrat, May 24, 1917

Grand Forks Herald, June 5, 1917

The Bismarck Tribune, June 5, 1917

The Hope Pioneer, June 21, 1917

Exemptions and Townley

June 12, 2017

On this date in 1917, draft registration was over and North Dakota fell slightly short of its goal; but with many already enlisted, Registration Day was deemed a success. Most registrants did not seek exemptions, however, there were some North Dakotans who came up with original excuses. First there was the man engaged to a girl who was a conscientious objector, and he could not go to war against her wishes. Another fellow stated that he had already been dismissed by the army because of health reasons, but upon questioning, it was learned that the army in question was the *Salvation Army*. One gentleman wished to be excused because blood made him sick, and another had a numb trigger finger. Several stated their church forbid it, but failed to name the church. Then there was the man who needed to remain home because he was the only barber in town. Possibly the most original was the Fargo man who could not go to war because he had planted a victory garden that only he could maintain. Upon inspection it was learned the so-called garden consisted of several stalks of beans, a few radishes and a couple of onions.

With the state preparing to help in the war effort, anti-war sentiment was not well received. Once such voice was prominent in North Dakota. The echoes of the patriotic celebrations of Registration Day had barely faded away, when Arthur Townley ... the founder of the Non-Partisan League ... proclaimed that the “Flower of the nation was going to die for the profit of the rich.” He said farmers are willing and able to increase crop production ten-fold, but he condemned the middlemen who bought the grain at \$1.50 a bushel and sold it for \$5.00.

Townley warned farmers that they should think of themselves and not increase production unless they were handled fairly, arguing that it was not the farmer who benefited from the high price of wheat. Lewis Crawford, President of the State Board of Regents, called Townley's word treasonous and stated, "All of our enemies are not in Germany." Townley countered that war profiteers will saddle the country with a huge debt which the soldiers, returning without arms, legs or eyes, would have to face ... a debt that could keep them slaves for decades. He believed big business, supported by corrupt government officials, was responsible.

Traveling with Townley, Governor Lynn Frazier, in a prophetic statement, advocated for the recall of government officials who did not do their duty as their constituents believed they should. Frazier himself would be the subject of a recall only five years later.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

"Find Numerous Excuses For Not Going to the Front", *Bismarck Tribune*, June 13, 1917

"Flower of the Nation to Die for Profits of the Rich," *Grand Forks Herald*, June 7, 1917

"Townley Fears War Will Boot Millionaires," *Bismarck Tribune*, June 12, 1917

Red Cross

June 21, 2017

On this date in 1917, the final total for selective service registration was announced. There were 64,124 North Dakota citizens registered. They also registered eighty-eight friendly aliens and six hundred and five enemy aliens, basically German nationals. Although it was twelve thousand short of projected, this did not include the four thousand men who had already enlisted or were serving in the North Dakota National Guard. Warrants were issued for five hundred identified slackers who had failed to register.

Meanwhile, President Wilson declared the third week in June to be dedicated to the American Red Cross. A. F. Clifford, chairman of the Grand Forks Red Cross Committee, reminded the citizens of the county that no government takes care of its wounded other than taking them by stretcher to the first aid camps. After that, the battle for the life or death of each man was up to the Red Cross workers who desperately needed financial aid to do their part.

With sixty-five thousand men from North Dakota eligible for duty in the trenches, Mr. Clifford offered a somber statistic. Based on Canadian casualties so far in the war, he stated that one out of five soldiers from North Dakota sent to the front would be killed or wounded. The War Department provided a one in twenty ratio, but either way, the reality of war was coming home. These men were all "somebody's boys," their own sons or their neighbor's. It was a hard selling point.

In Fargo, the Commercial Club set a quota of six thousand dollars a month for the city to raise in support of the Red Cross. A treasurer's office was set up in a local bank to handle the contributions.

In Langdon, a 4th of July picnic was planned, with all proceeds going to the Red Cross. The Red Cross Chapter covering both Williams and McKenzie Counties was seeking to raise ten thousand

dollars during the week. The Syrian Ladies Auxiliary and the Syrian Relief Fund donated \$100. All citizens of the area were asked to become Red Cross members, with the membership fees donated to the national fund.

While men waited to be drafted, women were encouraged to sign up to become Red Cross nurses. Training was offered to provide nurses for battlefield hospitals and local care giving. Sewing circles worked to provide mufflers, socks and mittens. A Red Cross auxiliary could be set up with ten members. Pamphlets could be obtained on the art of rolling surgical dressings or providing other services. All across North Dakota every man, woman, and child was asked to do their part that week in support of the Red Cross.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

“Red Cross Week Committee”, Grand Forks Herald, June 18, 1917

“Williston Chapter Asked for \$10,000 Share...” Williston Graphic, June 14, 1917

“Help the Red Cross,” Grand Forks Herald, June 25, 1917

War Gardens

June 28, 2017

When America entered World War I, it was not prepared. President Wilson’s program of providing aid, but still remaining neutral, had inspired a complacent atmosphere. The Declaration of War changed that. It was a time when most farmers still relied on horses, and the expected five-fold increase in agricultural production meant longer hours and better equipment. Seed grain was needed, large acreages needed plowing. This would all take time. In addition, farm machinery was difficult to obtain, and the cost of pig iron and the steel casings needed to manufacture new implements was rising dramatically. Then there was the shortage of skilled factory labor.

With the young men going off to war, there would also be an intense shortage of farm labor. To address that, many areas within the state were forming organizations, with names like the Mouse River Valley Immigration Bureau, to encourage immigration.

But food production in North Dakota was not only for the farmer. War gardens were springing up in communities across the state. In Garrison, the Mayor plowed up his lawn and planted it to potatoes and corn. A local banker, also a city official, followed suit, and soon every square foot of tillable ground in Garrison had been planted to gardens. In Grand Forks, the high school had a summer agricultural training class and provided a garden on the school grounds. Students received credits for participating in the program, with each one responsible for a half-acre plot. Over one hundred students were taking part.

Food conservation was also part of the war effort. Louis Moothart of Cando was a crack shot with a rifle, and in a two-month period he had managed to kill or wound over nine hundred Richardson ground squirrels, commonly called Flickertails. Based on the loss of a bushel of grain per critter, not including all of the offspring these rodents would produce, his prowess with a rifle saved nine hundred bushels of grain. At \$2.00 per bushel, over eighteen hundred dollars was added to the local economy for the war effort.

Then there was the story of the city lad in North Dakota who wanted to do his bit to help with the war by raising potatoes. He was a little distraught when an Extension bulletin indicated that potatoes were supposed to be raised in hills. His yard was perfectly flat. Of course the name of the city where he lived was not provided, for this was that proverbial kind of guy who always lived over in the next county.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

“Farm Machinery Is Very Scarce,” *The Wahpeton Times*, June 28, 1917

“Mayor Plows Up Yard,” *The Bismarck Tribune*, June 21, 2017

“Summer Courses for Gardens,” *Grand Forks Herald*, June 11, 1917

Grand Forks Herald, June 20, 1917

Fourth of July

July 4, 2017

With many of North Dakota’s young men and women already serving on the battlefields in Europe, the 4th of July in 1917 promised to be a day of commemoration and consecration. For some, it was difficult to call it a day of celebration, but unlike Memorial Day, with the somber reflection that death may await loved ones serving overseas, the 4th of July remained a celebration of patriotism, commemorating the battle for independence and democracy. According to the Pioneer Express from Pembina County, “It was observed as a day to be joyful of the memories of the past, proud of our history and progress, but thoughtful of the present and future.”

The town of Pembina celebrated with an impressive parade. This included many floats with themes such as Liberty, the Conservation of Food, Law and Order, and Transportation. There were other war-related floats such as a Field Hospital, a Red Cross Ambulance and even a naval theme represented by two large submarines complete with deck guns and radio antennas, and powered from beneath the waves by hidden automobiles. Young ladies flitted through the crowds pinning ribbons on lapels for those who contributed to the Red Cross.

The parade was followed by patriotic speeches, a ball game and picnics. Notably missing, however, were the fireworks, an otherwise grim reminder of the millions of shells falling on the battlefields overseas.

In Fargo, Island Park was the scene of a special flag raising with the Fargo Band playing the Star Spangled Banner. That was followed by a day of patriotic speeches. A flag committee had been organized to hand out flags as people entered the park. A reading of the Declaration of Independence was followed by the audience singing “America.” Here too, a ball game entertained the crowds, and the evening featured a patriotic program. As a special treat, free lemonade was supplied for the children.

At the Chautauqua in Tolley, North Dakota, Governor Fraizer spoke to more than fifteen thousand people, the largest crowd ever assembled at that event.

But as celebrations commenced across the state, war news continued to worsen. Battlefield casualties mounted, and National Guard units were entering the final stages of the organization as they readied for activation. North Dakota would soon be entering the war in a bigger way, with much more at stake.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Ward County Independent, July 5, 1917

Fargo Daily Courier News June 30, 1917

The Pioneer Express July 6, 1917

Call to the Colors

July 10, 2017

“N.D. Regiments Called to the Colors” screamed the headlines of the Bismarck Tribune on this date in 1917. The War Department had called the North Dakota troops into active federal service effective on July 15th. The Federal Militia Board was preparing for the transportation of the North Dakota National Guard, which was mobilizing on August 5th. Fort Lincoln in Bismarck was officially designated as the assembly point for all North Dakota troops. The various units of the guard were to be separated into sixteen practical divisions and assigned to camps for final training before being sent to France. When founded, the National Guard was designed to be a militia for the protection of the homeland. However, the proclamation activating the Guard contained a clause specifically discharging the force from militia status.

It was also noted that since April 2nd, three hundred and fifty-three North Dakotans had enlisted in the various branches of the military. This information indicated the enlistment by county so each county could be credited when determining their numbers required for the draft. Cass County led the way with forty-seven.

Mobilization plans were uncertain, and many units of the North Dakota National Guard lacked the required quota of men. With the organization of a Second Regiment in the state, the pressure was on to fill the ranks. Minot was the first to organize a full company, becoming Company A in the new regiment. The area around Crosby recruited enough men for a company in just a matter of hours, but others areas of the state had a tougher time. In Grand Forks for example, Company M, with its machine gun component, was having trouble recruiting volunteers.

When Capt. A. B. Welch proposed organizing a company of Sioux Indians from Standing Rock, Secretary of War Newton Baker opposed the plan and preferred to have them join units that had already been established in Bismarck or Mandan. Of the ninety-eight Native Americans registered in Sioux County only seven were citizens and eligible to join.

While many state draft registrants tried to avoid military service, there were those who enlisted but were rejected due to their physical condition. With poor eyesight, Ralph Beede, son of Judge Aaron McCaffery Beede failed the physical and wrote a letter home with a poem which read in part:

“With ancient longing, all forgot

For aye, I long to share the lot
Of those consumed as candles are...
To wage this God-appointed war.
For freedom destined to retrieve
World-Justice, right for those who grieve...
Oh God, rejected, "I am unfit,
To do and die and do my bit."

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Sioux County Pioneer, July 19, 1917

Grand Forks Herald, July 11, 1917

The Bismarck Tribune, July 10, 1917

Ward County Independent Jul 12, 1917

Food Supplies and Shortages

July 18, 2017

With the First World War raging in Europe, much of the land had been devastated, and food was scarce. Herbert Hoover, as national food administrator, submitted guidelines for housewives to follow to ensure an adequate supply of food at home and abroad. Those who signed a pledge to cooperate received a "home card," the first of many small publications concerning food supplies and rationing. They were instructed to buy less, serve smaller portions, and preach the Gospel of the clean plate. Full garbage pails in America meant empty dinner pails in Europe and America. They were also instructed to watch for the food wasters in the community.

Caught somewhat unprepared for America's entrance into the war, local farmers were struggling to meet demand. But even more serious, a lack of rain contributed to a 40% smaller wheat crop than anticipated, and food shortages were a real possibility. The good news was that a smaller crop meant higher prices for farmers. Potatoes, which had been planted in every available space, rural or urban, would now be needed to stabilize the food supply. Potato dehydrating facilities were proposed to help preserve the massive supply, plus reduce shipping space and costs.

A national shortage of rail transportation, always a problem in North Dakota, was creating havoc, not only for food, but all aspect of the war effort. Mountains of potatoes rotted in the east and coal destined for northern states laid stranded on the docks at Duluth. North Dakotans were warned to prepare for a scarcity of coal come winter. To ease the burden on shipping, locally grown vegetables were touted as a dinner table replacement for other commodities.

For some goods, especially those from Europe, the market had long been affected. Black market profiteers were quick to make a buck, and they weren't the only ones. Today we deal with computer scams and phone scams, but in 1917, chain letters were the gimmick. Many women in North Dakota, in fact, women from as far away as Manchuria, fell victim to a chain letter in which they were told to send copies of the letter to several of their friends. They could then send ten cents to a Post Office box in Minneapolis for which they would receive a silken petticoat.

Although the post office squelched the scheme early on, almost one million, one hundred thousand dimes were received, creating an impressive sum for 1917. Scarce items would provide opportunities for such unscrupulous activity throughout the war.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Dickinson Press, July 14, 1917

The Bismarck Tribune, July 26, 1917

Kate Richards O'Hare

July 26, 2017

On this date in 1917, the news from the front ... once again ... was grim. With the collapse of the Russian Army and the capture of their artillery due to a quick German advance, conditions on the Eastern Front were in disarray.

Col. Frank White, now in command of the newly formed 2nd Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard, received orders that he was to report to Palo Alto, California. This raised speculation that the destination of the regiment would be the Russian Front and not France. Col. John H. Fraine, commander of the 1st Regiment was also advised to report to California, adding credibility to the belief. However, others believed that these troops would be sent to the Philippines to relieve the more experienced Scouts, who would in turn transfer to the Russian Front. Many of the officers from North Dakota had experience in the Philippines, having served during the Philippine Insurrection.

As the seriousness of the mobilization became more apparent and the enthusiastic glow of patriotism waned to realism, necessary changes began taking place among the units. Older men were replaced by younger, more able recruits, and more experienced officers were chosen as the units prepared for active federal service.

Across North Dakota, draft registrants were hearing whether their number had been pulled as the results of the national drawing on July 20th were published. The first number drawn was 258, meaning every registrant who had been assigned that number was subject to the draft.

But among the whirlwind involved in the preparation for war and the call for patriotism, Kate Richard O'Hare, the noted Socialist lecturer, began a visit to North Dakota. As she stepped off the train for a lecture scheduled in Devils Lake, she was arrested by the US Marshall. In a speech at Bowman only a few nights before she stated that American women who didn't resist the taking of their sons in the Army were no better than brood sows. She also stated that the men who had volunteered were only fit for fertilizer when they got to France. For these seditious utterances she was charged with interfering in recruitment efforts and arranged in federal court in Fargo. On August 1st she was indicted by a Grand Jury.

In an editorial on July 31st, the Grand Forks Herald stated that we pride ourselves on being a free country and speech above all other things is free... but there are the times when discretion in speech is a desirable thing.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald July 26, 1917

The Bismarck Tribune, July 26, 1917

The Devils Lake World and InterOcean, August 2, 1917

The Hope Pioneer, July 26, 1917

Papelpu's Odyssey

August 7, 2017

When Alexander Papelpu obtained his homestead patent in Stark County on June 26, 1914 his future looked bright and promising. Having received his citizenship only six months before, he now decided it was time to return to his home country of Russia. Here he would take care of some business affairs and wed his sweetheart who awaited him there. They would then return to his homestead. But his return would be an epic journey of war, deprivation and diplomacy.

Only four days prior to the happy couple's departure for the United States, Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia began drafting an army, and Alexander was conscripted to serve. Having lost his naturalization record on the trip over, he had no proof that he was an American citizen and therefore found himself in the Russian army. His young bride, who had been wrestled from her husband's side after a three-day honeymoon, was forced to continue the journey to her new home alone.

On September 24, the Russian Third Army began the siege of the fortress city of Przemysl on the River San. Lacking sufficient artillery, the commander ordered a full-scale assault on the fortress. For three days the Russians attacked and accomplished nothing at the cost of 40,000 casualties. Alexander was one of five thousand soldiers left behind to cover the Russian withdrawal and was captured by the German Army.

As a German prisoner he watched as his fellow comrades died of starvation and exhaustion from forced labor. His fortune changed when he was taken to an Austrian prison camp where he fared much better. With better food and more humane treatment he managed to survive another seventeen months working for the local farmers and businessmen. As the months went by, his young bride Julia lobbied tirelessly to obtain his freedom based on his American citizenship. Through the efforts of Patrick Norton, North Dakota's Congressman from Hettinger, they were finally able to petition for his release through diplomatic wire pulling. In March of 1917, Alexander was granted safe passage to Switzerland and from there he made his way to France, arriving just as the United States declared war on Germany.

Alexander Papelpu returned to his farm fourteen miles south of Dickinson. On this date in 1917 he was enjoying a reunion with his young bride, who for almost three years feared that she would never see her husband again. Theirs was an odyssey unlike many who came from their home country, but for them it would remain a vivid realization of their freedom in America.

By Jim Davis

Source:

"Dickinson Man Three Years Prisoner of War Finally Home Again", The Bismarck Tribune
August 6, 1917 Page 8.

Labor Shortage

August 15, 2017

War news from Europe was somewhat grim in August of 1917, as the mobilization of troops in the United States was rapidly approaching. French initiatives in the Alsace- Loraine region, at first meeting with some success, were now being repulsed by German advances. Many sections of the line were deteriorating into trench warfare.

At home, those caught in the draft now found that their future was with the military. In all probability, they would be heading to the front-line trenches in France. With this realization, patriotism aside, a new wave of enlistments began, since those who enlisted could choose their branch of service or apply for the Officer Training School.

Across North Dakota, the labor market began feeling the pinch. Farmers found fewer workers to help with the harvest, and what workers were available were demanding higher wages. In previous years, farm workers who felt fortunate to receive twenty-five to thirty dollars a month plus board, were now requesting forty-five to sixty dollars a month.

On this date in 1917, the Grand Forks Herald lamented that the publishing world, filled with young, literate men, was also feeling the effects. The Herald had seen its staff reduced by ten employees. Three were members of the National Guard who had been mobilized, and two others with military experience had become commissioned officers in the Army. One member joined the Navy and another the Aviation Corps. Two had been accepted into the Officer Training School, and one on inactive status from the Mexican Border campaign, was now being recalled by the Army.

Practically all institutions with any considerable number of employees had their ranks invaded by the demands of war. Women were coming into their own to fill the void. In a program initiated by the Northern Pacific Railway, the wives of agents and operators were being trained to fill their husband's positions, as the men went off to war. In Mandan, the freight depot was offering \$75.00 per month for women to fill the positions of freight haulers.

The first military draft, in 1917, called over five hundred thousand men to service. By the end of the war, another 2.2 million would be conscripted. For many young men, the call to war meant postponing business careers or education. But for women, the significant labor shortage saw a change of the accepted roles for women as they secured new positions in the workforce.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, August 17, 1917

The Grand Forks Herald, August 15, 1917

The Hope Pioneer, August 9, 1917

The Bismarck Tribune, August 9, 1917

First to Leave

August 17, 2017

While newspapers across the state heralded the announcement that American soldiers were now poised to enter the war, they also carried grim reminders that North Dakotans who had joined the Canadian Armed Forces early on were already fighting and dying in the trenches in France.

For the most part, the units of the North Dakota National Guard were either at Fort Lincoln or still training at their local armories. They awaited the completion of huge Army bases to accommodate the large influx of soldiers. But not all units had to wait.

On this date in 1917, seventy-eight members the Hospital Corps of the First Battalion of the North Dakota National Guard stationed in Lisbon passed through Fargo on their way to Fort Deming, New Mexico. This was the first unit of the Guard to leave the state. They were given a rousing farewell as hundreds of people from all over the area gathered to wish them well in Lisbon and when the train stopped in Fargo. As a going away gift, the Hospital Corps was presented with over five hundred dollars in gold.

Among those present at the ceremony was W. J. Arnold, publisher of the *North Dakota Standard*, and Smith Stimmel, a Civil War veteran and former bodyguard to Abraham Lincoln.

Known as the North Dakota Patriotic Squadron, the two men were on a mission to visit every town in North Dakota to encourage the establishment of a Home Guard. When organized, the guard would act basically in a vigilante style to protect each community — a response to the power void created as men in law enforcement entered military service.

Of immediate concern was a group known as the Industrial Workers of the World, a socialistic, radical group of pro-union advocates. They were attempting to organize labor in the mines and factories as well as the migrant farm workers. Traveling like hobos, members of the IWW moved from one area in the state to the next, riding the rails in boxcars. By organizing strikes, they hampered the war effort, and were often blamed for committing acts of violence. Barns and haystacks were burned and farmers threatened.

Nationally, Wobblies, as they were called, were arrested, harassed and even tarred and feathered. In Butte, Montana, Frank Little, a member of the executive committee of the IWW, was taken from his room and hanged from a railroad trestle. In North Dakota, Governor Lynn Frazier issued a proclamation protecting their constitutional rights, but all across North Dakota, Home Guard units sprang up endeavoring to enforce laws and to ensure patriotic principles. Wobblies beware.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald, August 17, 1917

Jamestown Weekly Alert August 2, 1917

German Nationals

September 4, 2017

At the beginning of the war, German nationals in the US without citizenship were monitored. In North Dakota there wasn't any widespread mistreatment, but US District Attorney Melvin Hildreth, of Fargo, advised German nationals to "obey the law and keep your mouth shut." Facing harsh censorship, some German newspapers elected to cease publication. However, the *Emmons County Record* added a full section in German in August of 1917.

German aliens were required to sign up for the draft, but even if their number was drawn, they weren't required to serve. Other resident aliens were also exempt, like the many young Canadian men subject to the draft in Canada, who sought refuge in the United States.

German nationals in North Dakota were tolerated as long as they were quick to buy bonds, pledge their allegiance to the United States, and otherwise support the war. Those who failed could find their name in the newspaper and be shunned by the local community, or worse.

Full protection under the law was not afforded to aliens. Although not charged with anything, Harry Merrick, working with a threshing crew in North Dakota, was detained at Portal and placed in the Ward County jail for over a month simply for being a German national. Even those who had homesteaded in the state and had filed a Declaration of Intention to become a citizen found that citizenship was not guaranteed.

On this date in 1917, a naturalization hearing was about to be held in District Court in Fargo to grant citizenship for twenty men from a number of European countries. However, an 1802 law prohibited naturalization for immigrants from enemy nations during times of war. That meant citizenship was denied for four of the men — German nationals Josias Baasch, Otto Olm, Albert Roethke and Charles Miller. All but one would have to wait until the end of hostilities.

A change in the law in May of 1918 opened the door for Albert Roethke. Upon submitting a letter declaring that he would spend a considerable portion of time studying to become a loyal and useful citizen, he was granted citizenship on November 6, 1918, only five days before the war ended.

Three from Austria were naturalized even though Austria fought on the side of Germany. The lack of a formal declaration of war against Austria made it possible for the men to become citizens.

While no widespread mistreatment of Germans here was initially evident, it should be noted that as North Dakota soldiers began dying on the battlefields of France, tensions did mount, and expressing pro-German sympathies was risky.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

New York Tribune, November 26, 1918 p 7

Grand Forks Herald, September 5, 1917 p 4

Draftees Mobilization

September 12, 2017

Until the end of summer in 1917, the war was still somewhat impersonal for most North Dakotans. Many young men seeking adventure had joined in the early months of the war, but most communities were not affected and deaths were few. Those who enlisted over the summer had departed as individuals or in small groups amid the fanfare of patriotic celebrations.

The main units of the North Dakota National Guard were still stationed within the boundaries of the state. With few North Dakotans in harm's way, the war was more of an inconvenience. Rationing had not yet become a part of everyday life, but people were asked to conserve most resources. For many, it was not until the first call of draftees that the reality of war was brought home. These men were being stripped from the community, and their destiny became tied to the battlefields of Europe. Many were married with young families, and many were nurturing careers. Plans were postponed, and families would wait now anxiously for their return.

Now that the draft selection was almost complete, the time had come to begin moving the massive numbers of men. Only 5% of the assigned quota was initially called up. Once they subtracted credits for those who enlisted or were members of the National Guard, North Dakota's share was only ninety men statewide.

On the 6th of September, Cass County's quota of eighteen men boarded the special Northern Pacific train at Fargo containing three sleeper cars en route to Camp Dodge, Iowa. Several thousand people, including units of the National Guard, jammed the avenues leading to the train station. Among the tears and good cheers, the Cass County men joined their fellow draftees who had boarded at stations further west. On this date in 1917, another, much larger contingent of draftees, numbering almost two thousand men, was notified to prepare for mobilization.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union provided each man with a comfort kit. It was a bag approximately 10 by 13 inches with a drawstring at the top. The contents included needles, thread, and other sewing goods, as well as shaving soap, regular soap, toothpaste, a toothbrush, a small mirror, a pocketknife and shoelaces. The WCTU was a strong advocate for abolishing the use of tobacco, so it was ironic that as they were passing out the comfort kits, nearby the Fargo Forum was collecting funds to provide tobacco kits – another of the comforts from home.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, July 2, 1917

Fargo Forum, September 11, 1917

Fargo Forum, September 14, 1917

Undesirables

September 18, 2017

On this date in 1917, many of the state's young men were in military camps around the state, having been mobilized through the draft or as members of the National Guard. Consequently, an increase in crime was seen as the absence of so many young men made it harder for the citizenry to counter criminal behavior. Small bands of criminals, "yeggs" as they were commonly called, used the opportunity to extort and plunder farmers and communities. Especially vulnerable were the older, rural couples isolated on the farms, with their sons off to war.

Criminals found it easy, under the guise of needing travel information or temporary shelter, to gain entrance to the homes. Once they subdued the occupants with ropes or other devices, the robbers were free to search the premises at leisure, leaving plenty of time to vacate the vicinity before their crime was discovered.

Travelers also fell victim. Two men were robbed on a train near Leeds and forced to jump from the rail car. Other travelers were stopped, beaten senseless, and robbed.

Grand Forks Police Chief J. W. Lowe stated that there were more bad-men in the region than there had been for years. He stated that extreme vigilance was needed since North Dakota appeared to have become a clearinghouse for undesirables. While some events were believed to be spontaneous robberies, others appeared to be the work of organized gangs. A department store in Foxholm was robbed of twenty-eight pairs of shoes. In Edmore a hardware store was entered, and revolvers, flashlights, and watches were taken.

With such roving bands, few communities were safe. Most crimes occurred under the cover of darkness and many were committed along the railroad lines, which offered an easy means of escape.

Meanwhile professional "yeggs" robbed Post Offices and banks using explosives to open safes, and bootleggers met less resistance in plying their trade.

As advocated by Smith Stimmel and J. W. Arnold of the Dakota Patriotic Squadron, the need for a home guard was becoming apparent. In Devils Lake, a consignment of 45 caliber rifles was received from the federal government to arm the home guard members. The small community of Hanna boasted of a unit of sixty men. The town of Milton deputized all the men of that community and nearby farmers.

It was a time when vigilante justice filled a law-enforcement void – reminiscent of the frontier days.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, September 28, 1917

Grand Forks Herald, September 19, 1917

Devils Lake World and Inter-Ocean, September 6, 1917

Ward County Independent, September 20, 1917
Ibid, September 23, 1917

Books for Soldiers

September 22, 2017

The war caught America unprepared, not only by an inadequate military establishment, but in a source of revenue to fund it. It soon became apparent that to be a good, patriotic, American citizen, one had to be a “giving” citizen. Slackers were not only those who failed to serve, but were also those who failed to contribute monetarily to the many causes.

In April of 1917, Congress passed the Emergency Loan Act, creating the First Liberty Loan. It authorized the sale of almost two billion dollars in Liberty Bonds. Solid campaigning and patriotic speeches helped promote the bonds and the goal was reached by mid-summer. But as the military buildup began, it was clear that two billion dollars would not be enough, and in mid-September a call went out for a second Liberty Loan Drive.

This had a goal of an additional three billion dollars, but this was only one of a number of causes for which Americans had to dip deep. There was also financial aid for war refugees and food drives. On the battlefield, there was the American Red Cross attending to the welfare of the soldiers. Using images of the wounded and the dying ... the sons, husbands and sweethearts ... the Red Cross struck an emotional chord with the American public.

Another among the causes was one adopted by the American Library Association. It envisioned suitable libraries for all military camps both at home and with the forces overseas. To meet that end, they began a national campaign to raise a million dollars with a slogan of, “A Million Dollars for a Million Books for a Million Soldiers.” Along with the money, they collected books and magazines of all kinds.

A young, Bavarian immigrant, a war refugee, was well aware of the power of books. The Rev. Francis Xavier Hollnberger of Belfield was registered in Stark County as a former German officer in Kaiser Wilhelm’s army. But not only had he been a German officer, he was also a Catholic priest and the former librarian to the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination sparked the onset of the War.

Anticipating the events that followed the assassination, he claimed a religious exemption from military service and immediately set sail for America. As a friend of Bishop Vincent Wehrle of the Bismarck Diocese, he was able to find a predominantly German parish in southwest North Dakota. For this former librarian, both books and the war held a special meaning.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald September 24, 1917

The Bismarck Tribune, September 18, 1917

Civilian Casualty on the Home Front

September 28, 2017

On this date in 1917, the Second Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard prepared to leave for Camp Greene, North Carolina. Among them was Joseph Jordan, a Sioux of the Standing Rock Reservation, who had enlisted in Company I, Second Infantry of the guard on July 22 that same year. He was anxious about what lay ahead for him.

But war does not discriminate; it feeds upon both the fears of the soldiers who courageously face death, and also upon the families and friends who worry about their safety – burdened with the fear of never casting their eyes on their loved one again.

On the night before departure, Joseph Jordan's eighteen-year-old wife joined him in Bismarck. She spent the night weeping and begging him to allow her to accompany him to Camp Greene, but that was not possible. He repeatedly assured her that he would be fine and she would have to remain behind. For the distraught young bride, this reassurance was not enough.

As the train left the station, the lifeless body of Sarah Jordan lay in a mortuary but a few hundred yards from the tracks. Unable to overcome the grief of seeing her husband off to war, the young woman, in the early morning hours, came into the bedroom and cried out that she had taken poison. As she slumped onto the bed, a bottle of carbolic acid fell from her hands and clattered on the floor. Her husband rushed her to the hospital, but nothing could be done. She died within the hour. Her remains would be returned home to the reservation, escorted by her family. In the eyes of many, she was Sioux County's first victim of the Great War.

Only four hours after the death of his wife, Private Joseph Jordan boarded the train, bound for Camp Greene and eventually the battlefields of Europe. He served overseas from December 15, 1917 to January 3, 1919 and was wounded during the fighting. According to General Order #5, issued from the 1st Infantry Brigade at Selters, Germany, he showed gallant conduct and self-sacrificing spirit during numerous battles in France and Germany. He was cited for his courage and awarded a Silver Star.

But for this bereaved husband and soldier, his greatest battle was fought long before he faced the enemy guns on the battlefields of France.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Sioux County Pioneer October 5, 1917

Bismarck Tribune, September 29, 1917

Roster of the Men and Women Who Served in the Army or Naval Service (Including the Marine Corps) of the United States or Its Allies from the State of North Dakota in the Great War, 1917-1918; by the Adjutant General's Office; 1931.

National Guard Units Leave

October 4, 2017

For the units of the North Dakota National Guard, the days in camp took on the feel of a summer bivouac more than a preparation for war. Soldiers received furloughs to return home and help with farm work or just to visit families and sweethearts. Since the officers and men had known each other for years, the relaxed atmosphere created disciplinary problems.

Soldiers left camp without permission. Some even got married. Although still waiting for final orders, the units had been mobilized, and America was at war. Being absent without leave could be viewed as desertion, and desertion during a time of war was an extremely serious crime. Fortunately for the local boys, penalties were rather light. In one instance, a soldier was given four days in the guardhouse and docked two days pay for each day absent.

Speculation was rampant that North Dakota's units were to be sent to the Philippines to relieve the more experienced troops, which would then be sent to the Russian front to help train and support Russia's army. So, when the order for deployment of the North Dakota National Guard to Camp Greene, North Carolina came on September 21, it was a bitter disappointment for many, because an East Coast camp meant deployment to the battlefields of Europe. The two North Dakota regiments had a total of 3,678 soldiers.

On this date in 1917, the last of the Guard units were on their way to North Carolina. Only two weeks prior, almost two thousand draftees had left the state for Camp Dodge, Iowa, and it was no secret that they were to be sent to Europe. In a period of three weeks, over 5,600 of North Dakota's young men had left the state, with the probable destination of the front lines in France.

Emotions ran high. In Cavalier County, Martin Dahl was worried about his younger brother Bennie, who had been drafted and had never been away from home. Believing that his place was by his brother's side, Martin received special permission from the governor and volunteered for the draft so he could accompany his brother to the front. They served together through basic training, but were in separate units when sent to the front lines in France.

Although wounded, Bennie survived, but Martin died on August 6, 1918, at the battle of Aisne-Marne, possibly only a few miles from his younger brother whose unit also fought in that offensive.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Courier-Democrat, September 27, 1917

Ibid, September 5, 1918

Nonpartisan League

October 10, 2017

Within a few years of its organization, the Nonpartisan League was overwhelming North Dakota's political landscape by the time war was declared in 1917. It quickly denounced the US entry into the war, stating it was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight. It found a sympathetic

ear among the rural population of North Dakota that had seen its sons and husbands march off to war, while war profiteering significantly increased the costs of farming.

Due to a drought, crop yields were poor. Ranchers, desperate for hay, culled their herds. Eastern millers set grain prices low and dockages were excessive. With wartime labor scarce, migrant farm workers demanded higher wages, so farmers were forced to band together to reduce labor costs. The price of gas, tires and machine parts had become excessive, and most farmers could no longer afford to buy modern machinery. The effort to increase war-time production meant longer hours in the fields at a time when thousands of prime draft horses were picked up by the military, making work horses scarce.

The socialistic platform of the NPL promised a new era for the farmer. It called for an end to the flour trusts and a lessened dependence on eastern capitalists. The government would oversee transportation costs, and railroad rates would be regulated. North Dakota farmers were promised fair prices for their commodities, and state supported institutions, such as a state bank and a state mill would aid the farmer. Many small businessmen whose welfare depended upon farmers also supported the NPL.

During the summer of 1917, along with everything else, the price of wheat increased to match the cost of production. However this increase was short lived. The Federal Price Fixing Commission, created to regulate excessive war profits, now set the cost of #1 wheat at \$2.20 a bushel. This was down from a market price of \$3.30. However, this same commission failed to address the costs of such things as steel, lumber, canned goods, and even flour. This became ammunition for the Nonpartisan League and its leaders, A.C. Townley, Governor Lynn Fraizer and Senator Asle Gronna. They mounted an impressive campaign denouncing the war and war profiteering. But the industrially supported, eastern press, as well as anti-League factions in the Northern Plains, were able to label the NPL as Socialists, pro-German, and unpatriotic.

Nonpartisan League members were accused of treason, and meetings were banned in many midwestern states. While a majority of North Dakotans clung to the hope of better treatment in the marketplace, the Nonpartisan League began losing support, and was forced to tone down its rhetoric and proclaim its patriotism.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Nonpartisan Leader, July 5, 1917

Ibid, September 13, 1917

Ward County Independent, September 6, 1917

North Dakota Black Contingent

October 19, 2017

By the first week of October in 1917, all of the North Dakota National Guard and approximately forty-five percent of those who were drafted had left the state for Camp Dodge, Iowa or Camp Greene, North Carolina. A third segment of the conscripted men had yet to receive their date of departure. Citizens and non-citizens, and all racial segments of North Dakota's male population 21 to 30 years of age, had been required to register on June 5th.

A number of Native Americans were included, and there were two Chinese from Stutsman County two more from Grand Forks County.

For black soldiers, there came an interesting twist. It had been rumored that German agents had attempted to raise a revolt among the black people of the United States. W. S. Turley, living south of Dickinson, quoted part of a speech made in early April by Roscoe Simmons, nephew of Booker T. Washington, as to the loyalty of the African-American. "Woodrow Wilson is my leader," he said, "If he calls me to the colors I will not ask if my color is black or white... Grievances I have against this people, against this government. Injustice to me there is, bad laws there are upon the statute books, but," he said, "in this hour of peril I forget – and you must forget, all thoughts of self or race, or creed or politics ... or color."

On October 14th, Provost Marshal General Crowder instructed Adjutant General Fraser that one percent of the black contingent of the North Dakota draft army was to prepare to move to Camp Dodge commencing on October 27th, where a black regiment would be formed. But the list of African-American men eligible in the entire state contained only fifty names!

One per cent of this number means that one half of an individual had to be sent. For Harrison Abbott of Grand Forks, who had received his draft notice, this was a dilemma. He was to represent North Dakota's one percent black quota. Jokingly, he commented that he was trying to figure out which part of his body he will have to send to training camp in order to comply with the Provost Marshal's instructions. When his orders finally came, he stated that he was somewhat relieved at the thought that Uncle Sam wanted "all o' me there was to get."

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Weekly Times-Record, Oct 18, 1917

Grand Forks Herald, Oct 18, 1917 p12)

Ibid, October 27, 1917

Birth of the 164th

October 24, 2017

The Second Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard had been quickly assembled with volunteers having little or no military experience. Most of the officers had not seen any extensive military service since receiving commissions during the Philippine Insurrection, so it was difficult to obtain approval from the Federal Government. Many hurdles had to be overcome, but the "Smashing Second" as it was known, was eventually called to the colors to join the First Regiment at the end of September.

The US military was ill prepared for the huge influx of troops, and much reorganization was required, especially among the Guard units. Because many of its members had recently served in the Mexican Border war, the First Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard remained intact upon arrival at Camp Greene, North Carolina. Unfortunately, the Smashing Second became the Smashed Second. Composed of raw recruits with only marginal training, they were not viewed

as a viable fighting unit. Its companies were scattered to other units and the officers were placed in limbo as to what their assignments would be.

Seeing a need to better organize the American Expeditionary Force, the US Command numbered Regular Army units 1 to 100. Units composed of National Guard soldiers were numbered 101 to 300, and units containing draftees were assigned numbers above 300. The four infantry regiments that made up the 41st Division were the 161st, from Washington; the 162nd, from Oregon; the 163rd from Montana; and the 164th, drawn from the First Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard.

Unexpectedly, five hundred and eighty-two members of the Second Regiment were also attached to the 164th, and, on this date in 1917, approximately one thousand North Dakota draftees from Camp Dodge, Iowa were in route to bring the undermanned regiment to full strength. But sadly, within two weeks of the birth of the 164th, it recorded its first death. Ralph Early, an eighteen-year-old member of Company I from Wahpeton, and sick for only a few weeks, died on October 23rd, becoming its first casualty.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, October 11, 2017

The Grand Forks Herald, October 29, 1917

Ibid: October 20, 1917

Citizens as Soldiers, A History of the North Dakota National Guard, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1986.

Swell Letters

November 2, 2017

With the troops now gone, those remaining in North Dakota took on the challenge of dealing with many concerns. Winter was fast approaching and a coal shortage was becoming critical. While the Great Lakes were still open for shipping, coal was slow in reaching the docks, and the demand was great across the Northern Plains. To make matters worse, coal strikes at Burlington, near Minot, were keeping six hundred tons per day of locally-produced coal off the market, and rationing was sure to follow.

While rationing quotas had not begun for food, people were being asked to conserve. On this date in 1917, thousands of Food Pledge letters were being distributed in North Dakota. Helping the food campaign meant readjustments in eating habits. Among the foods quickly becoming scarce was sugar. Guidelines for sugar conservation included leaving frosting off cakes and cookies, and reducing the consumption of candy and soft drinks. If everyone used one ounce less sugar a day, one hundred thousand tons per month could be shared with our allies.

On October 29, a carefully worded message had come that American troops were now at the front, and at 6:00 AM on a recent day, an American artillery unit had fired the first shell by American forces. The empty shell case was to be sent to President Wilson. At this same time, American troops had entered the front line trenches.

As for the families worrying at home, they anxiously waited for letters from their boys in service. For some of the young men who had never been away from home, the whole event was quite an adventure. The experience was, in their words, “swell.” Soldiers like J. R. Quinlivan from Valley City wrote home from Camp Greene, stating that they had a swell camp and even had a swell dinner with some swell old Southern people. Max Giese from Jamestown thought that they had some pretty swell entertainment at the Y. M. C. A. every night at Camp Grant, while Chuck Harmon of the 164th at Camp Greene thought things were pretty swell there, too.

As the troops began moving to their points of departure for France, censorship became stricter. Germans submarines stalked the waters. Any hint as to when troop transports would be sailing could send hundreds of men to a watery grave. The flow of letters from the camps would be stemmed, but for the time being, for the folks at home, any letters from their loved ones were ... in a word... “swell.”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Weekly Times Record, Valley City, October 18, 1917

Jamestown Weekly Alert November 1, 1917

Grand Forks Herald November 2, 1917

Sioux County Pioneer, November 1, 1917

Keeping Busy

November 9, 2017

With the war raging in Europe, there was plenty to do for North Dakotan's in the fall of 1917. School programs of both an academic and patriotic nature proliferated. There were bake sales to support the YMCA, a newly created fund-raising effort, and sewing circles for the Red Cross. The Red Cross enlisted women in every part of North Dakota to provide mittens, socks, surgical dressings and other items needed desperately by the military. They preached quality, not quantity, and hoped that the sheer number of participants would help fill their quotas. It was fall, and agricultural fairs showcased the products raised on the farm. Local farmers, unable to serve, found hog raffle fund-raisers a convenient way to contribute to the war cause.

Providing a welcome diversion from the war was the evolving film industry. It was a time when film underwent the transition from short, one-reel programs to feature films with stars like Charlie Chaplain, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.

For men there was the fall hunting season, but with prohibition in effect, bellying up to the bar was not an option ... at least not legally. And although the harvest was over, there were still the year-end chores, like fall plowing and corn husking.

Coinciding with the war was a quick exit of migrant workers after the harvest. At fault was North Dakota's Bone Dry Law. Having made their stake, these men were anxious to get to some place where they could wash the threshing dust out of their throats. With higher wages and an abundance of work, they had more money than they ever had before. As one editor put it, “they were heading to joyland to put their golden crop through the separators of the great white way.”

So, besides the many year-end chores to complete, there was the annual fall preparation of fruits, vegetables and meats – the curing and canning – that would carry families through the winter. But the wartime rules about food conservation and hoarding had some people confused.

So confusing were the regulations, that it prompted the federal government to issue an announcement to homemakers. It promised that Uncle Sam and Herbert Hoover, the Food Commissioner, didn't want the jelly and the jam families had preserved. They stated that when a slick-looking "food inspector" comes along offering to confiscate all one hundred quarts you've put away, don't listen. He's a thief. Gently call your dog, reach for your shotgun, phone the sheriff, and then call the coroner. They prompted, "Do your duty."

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, November 8, 1917

Williston Graphic, November 1, 1917

The Ward County Independent, November 8, 1917

Wells County Farmer, October 18, 1918

The Fighting Chaplain

November 15, 2017

When the North Dakota Second Regiment was organized for the Great War in the early summer of 1917, they found a champion in the form of Herbert G. Markley of Hamilton, North Dakota. Gov. Lynn Frazier appointed Markley as the Chaplain for the Smashing Second on July 5th.

Known as the "Fighting Chaplain," he made it his mission to travel across the state collecting money for a chaplain's fund, to be used for the personal needs of the men in the Second Regiment, both in camp or later when they were sent to France. The fund was money that could be accessed immediately without a lot of red tape. Markley was determined to build up the fund before the troops left North Dakota. Although he was the Chaplain for the Second Regiment, he was not an ordained minister at the time of his appointment.

That was resolved in early October, when Lieutenant Markley was ordained during the Methodist Church conference in Dickinson.

Lt. Markley traveled across North Dakota speaking in churches, schools, patriotic gatherings – anyplace where he could get his point across. He also carried a book in which he recorded the names of young ladies willing to be contacted if a soldier did not receive mail from home and needed some cheering.

Lt. Markley was a gifted speaker and an extreme patriot. He admonished any anti-war talk and stated that for those who uttered treasonable comments, telephone poles could be used for more than just stringing wires. When approached by a man who stated he was a German-American, Markley called him a liar and replied, "You're either an American or not an American, there are no hyphenated men in this country at this time." Early in his career, Markley had run on the socialist ticket for a state senate seat in Pennsylvania, for which he hoped he had been forgiven.

In a bold move, in the Nonpartisan League stronghold of Crosby, Markley “scathingly denounced the socialists, the IWW, Townley, Senator Gronna, and other antiwar activists, summing them all up as traitors, saying, “I have no use for anyone who will either sanction or lend their aid or assistance to such traitorous or seditious utterances...” He called for the impeachment of US Senators Robert La Follette of Illinois and A. J. Gronna from North Dakota. The Reverend Markley was very successful in his fund raising, perhaps too successful, having accumulated over forty-five hundred dollars for the regiment, just as the “Smashing Second” was smashed, scattered upon arrival at Camp Greene. Markley, now assigned to the 116th Engineers, suddenly had to disperse the gathered funds!

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, October 9, 1917

The Washburn Leader, September 28, 1917

The Grand Forks Herald, July 5, 1917

Ibid, November 26, 1917

Thanksgiving 1917

November 23, 2017

Today is Thanksgiving. On this date in 1917, the people of North Dakota were planning for the first major holiday with many loved ones away, awaiting transportation to the battlefields of Europe. Although it was a more subdued and solemn occasion than past Thanksgivings, with most of North Dakota’s servicemen still stateside, it was not a grim occasion.

Most families planned to celebrate with a Thanksgiving dinner, but what kind of dinner? Many were tempted to dine on the traditional turkey, depending upon their ability to obtain, or afford, the necessary ingredients, but most turkeys were destined for the military. For the patriotic, there was the Hooverized dinner, recommended by Herbert Hoover, the US Food Commissioner.

The Hooverized dinner called for a wheatless, meatless, fatless and sugarless meal, but for this occasion, most avoided the meatless option. One menu proposed chicken, potatoes, carrots, a green salad, cornbread and honey, with fruit for dessert. Beets and turnips were suggested as substitutes for potatoes. Oysters and fish were other popular items. Better yet, a variety of meals could be found at local hotels, including Hooverized versions, with the added benefit of on-site entertainment.

For many soldiers of the 164th, as well as the 116th Engineers and the 114th Infantry, which contained former units of the North Dakota Second Regiment, Cupid, not Tom Turkey, was King. Along with the normal trappings of the season, Thanksgiving week was a time for weddings prior to the troops’ departure for France, and the weddings took all forms, from regal, to simple ceremonies, and even elopements. The wedding of Capt. Charles Rouse of Crosby and Myrtle Kreiser of Minneapolis was an elegant but quiet affair that took place in the Martinique Hotel in New York City.

On the other hand, the wedding of Walter Zuber of Harvey and Myrtle May Allis of Cleveland, Ohio, took place using a tent with a makeshift altar at Camp Mills. The Rev. H. G. Markley, the

Fighting Chaplain with the 116th, performed the ceremony, and the former Second Regimental Band, conducted by Harold Backman, played the Lohengrin Wedding March. The regiment's ukulele band then serenaded the couple. Following that, the couple passed between two lines of soldiers to a waiting taxicab at the end of the street. Over sixteen hundred soldiers showered them with rice.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Williston Graphic, November 29, 1917

The Grand Forks Herald, November 26, 1917

The Evening World, New York, November 26, 1917

Evening Capitol News, Boise, ID October 26, 1917

Calmer Times

November 28, 2017

Early in September of 1917, as the units of the North Dakota National Guard awaited orders, the *Fargo Forum* published an editorial cautioning the citizens of North Dakota that now was the time to address the feelings toward friends and neighbors who were German immigrants. It stated that, "... they were now enjoying a moment when the blood courses calmly, but it would not remain so long. When the news of wounds and death among the loved ones at the front fills the cables, then there will no longer be apathy in the American homes."

The *Forum* blamed the German language press for a rise in anti-German sentiment. Attributing this to selfish motives, the paper claimed the German language press had become a dying institution in the United States, and it was profit that motivated the papers more than patriotism to the mother country. Pro-German sources were spending large sums to influence feelings towards the war, and with the Germans in North Dakota anxious for word from home, subscriptions soared. Unfortunately, with insidious propaganda and seditious remarks, the trend had clouded the issues both for the German immigrants and in the minds of the general public.

The *Forum* concluded that it remained for the Germans who were resolved to continue in this country as to how to approach their future. It warned, "They will have to face their neighbors through many tomorrows. And the sentiments of those neighbors ... evolved from the bloody events that will soon be upon us, will be the sentiments of the children of those neighbors towards their children."

There was a lot to consider.

Only two months after the *Forum* editorial, American troops were occupying the trenches in France. Although no North Dakota troops had yet reached Europe, the absence of these men from their homes was felt by those left behind. Remarks perceived as seditious or anti-war were less and less tolerated. News came from Granville, in McHenry County, that a local cobbler had been administered a "dose of patriotic punishment." It was rumored that Bernt Folstad had been for some time, making disloyal statements bordering on treason.

On the night of November 21st, over a hundred citizens decided to take action. Commandeering the fire truck, they trained the hose on the building, breaking the windows and soaking the shop and contents, as well as the owner. Following this, Folstad was marched to city hall where he was forced to kneel and kiss the American Flag. As the *Fargo Forum* editorial predicted, the time for calmer minds had passed.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bottineau Courant, November 22, 1917

The Wahpeton Times, September 6, 1917

The Ward County Independent, November 22, 1917

Taking on the American Legion

December 5, 2017

When the United States entered the war, a grand promise was made: America would “darken the skies of Germany” with a vast air armada. In 1917 the War Department asked Congress for \$640 million with the assurance that the planes would arrive at the front by May 1918. Congress approved the appropriation, the largest single amount ever granted, and President Wilson signed it into law in July 1917.

The reality was somewhat less impressive than the promise. By the time the war ended in 1918, there were only 196 American aircraft in service on the Western Front. It was apparent that the program was a failure. There were accusations of scandal.

On this date in 1919, the *Washburn Leader* reported on a World War Veterans meeting in Bismarck. The newspaper called the group a socialist organization and said it was determined to break the political influence of the newly established American Legion. The aircraft scandal played a role. Lester Barlow, a featured speaker at the World War Veterans meeting, used the aircraft scandal to heighten his audience’s resentment of the Wilson Administration and their disdain for the American Legion. He asserted that the American Legion was controlled by big business and a party to the graft. He said the Legion was more interested in politics than in helping veterans.

The newspaper said Barlow’s speech was full of unsupported assertions, innuendoes, and generalities. The newspaper pointed out that most of the American Legion delegates had served as enlisted men who were not interested in politics.

A bill had been introduced in the state legislature establishing an office for veterans’ affairs at the Capitol. The original bill included an office for the American Legion, but the Legion turned down that offer, determined to remain non-political.

The WWV’s challenge of the American Legion was not successful. The national organization had disbanded the previous spring, and it was a small chapter in Minneapolis that had tried to make inroads into North Dakota.

The American Legion, founded in the wake of the war, has survived through the years, with a membership today of nearly 2 ½ million. Notable former members include Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy.

By Carole Butcher

Sources:

Relevance: The Quarterly Journal of the Great War Society. "US Aircraft Production: Success or Scandal?" <http://www.worldwar1.com/tgws/relairprod.htm> Accessed 7 November 2017.

Washburn Leader. "Would Break the Legion." Washburn, ND. 5 December 1919. Page 1.

Camp Mills

December 6, 2017

Most of North Dakota's National Guard were assigned to the 41st Division at Camp Greene in early October of 1917, and in November, the division began moving to Camp Mills, New York to be closer to their embarkation point for the trip to France. Smaller units of the guard went to the 116th Engineers or the 148th Field Artillery, and were sent to Newport News, Virginia.

Camp Mills had few amenities, reported the *Weekly Times-Record* from Valley City on this date in 1917. The article stated that it was, "the meanest, nastiest, sloppiest, muckiest, foggiest, and dirtiest camp in the world." The soldiers were housed in rotting tents filled with holes that allowed in the rain and cold, which persisted throughout the days of the encampment. Eight-man tents often held twelve to sixteen men. A single camp stove per tent provided little comfort as fuel was in short supply. Water lines froze, and showers and clean clothes were nonexistent. On December 6th, after almost a month at Camp Mills, the 41st Division moved to the warm, wooden barracks of Camp Merritt, New Jersey. It was a brief respite from the winter weather before they boarded the ships at Hoboken to begin their voyage to Europe.

The smaller units of the guard, now at Newport News, fared slightly better. Unfortunately, their pay and health records had gone to Camp Mills and it wasn't until March that the War Department bureaucracy caught up.

Meanwhile back in North Dakota, a coal shortage was being felt. The temperature had plummeted to 28 degrees below zero with highs also below zero. Rail car shortages had become critical. Limited to only a ton, or even at times a half ton of Eastern hard coal, North Dakotans were forced to look elsewhere to keep warm. New coal mines were opening all along the Northern Pacific Railway in the state. The discovery of a significant vein of lignite a half-mile south of Stanton promised a ready supply. The softer lignite coal, mostly ignored until the shortage, was soon finding its way to warm the homes and cook the food for North Dakotans.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Citizens as Soldiers, A History of the North Dakota National Guard, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1986.

The Oakes Times, December 13, 1917

Grand Forks Herald, December 13, 1917

The Weekly Times-Record, Valley City, December 6, 1917

Railroad Travelers

December 11, 2017

The War Department was ill prepared to handle the massive numbers of men and supplies required to fight the war in Europe. After leaving North Dakota, the troops saw minimal training at Camp Greene. Although they drilled eight hours a day, most combat exercises involved wooden rifles. Target practice consisted of only a few rounds of ammunition. Once the units were moved to Camp Mills in New York, almost all training stopped due to the extreme cold and lack of equipment. On this date in 1917, the 164th North Dakota and the 116 Engineers, now at Camp Merritt, New Jersey, were awaiting orders for overseas deployment – whether ready or not. Finally the orders came to transfer the sixteen miles to Hoboken to board ships and begin the journey to the front.

For the families back home in North Dakota, heavily censored letters had been arriving. Most concerned the conditions at Camp Mills with only a slight mention of Camp Merritt. Troop movements and embarkation dates were carefully guarded. Any leaked information could be relayed to German submarines off the Atlantic Coast, endangering the troop ships.

With Christmas soon approaching, any news of the North Dakota boys was welcome. The fact that loved ones were on the verge of going to the front was on the minds of everyone. Red Cross chapters across the state were seeing an increase in membership and an increase in production of socks, helmet liners, and other cold-weather items. Like the troops at the front, North Dakota was undergoing a period of frigid temperatures.

At Langdon on the first week of December, the thermometer hit thirty-nine below. Coal remained in extremely short supply and the suffering was widespread. But to complicate matters, the shortage affected the railroads. Railroads ran on coal, and due to the shortage, the Great Northern announced a reduced schedule. Daily passenger service was curtailed, and the number of passenger cars reduced, replaced by an increase in baggage cars for war supplies. At the busiest travel time of the year, seats meant for passengers were often taken over by huge stacks of mail. It appeared that for the holiday season, the coal shortage left the already congested railroad system in a significant tangle. The homecoming for Christmas travelers was a journey of uncertainty.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Courier Democrat, Langdon, ND, December 18, 1917

Ward County Independent, December 13, 1917

The Face of War

December 20, 2017

We were at War, and for Carl Kositzky, State Auditor for North Dakota, the Great War had more meaning than many. His father, Gustave Kositzky had immigrated to Yankton, Dakota Territory from Germany in 1871, but his business interests eventually brought him to North Dakota.

A veteran of both the Austrian/Prussian War and the Franco/Prussian War, Gustave's military background had a large influence on his sons. While Carl did not enter the military, he had three brothers who did. On this date in 1917, he learned that another brother, Edwin Kositzky, had enlisted. Edwin was a former employee in the mail room of the Bismarck Tribune, and a student at the University of Nebraska. Along with his three brothers and a number of cousins, Edwin became the fourteenth American Kositzky who joined the fight against Germany, making a total of twenty-three Kositskys involved in the war, for there were nine German cousins who were fighting for the Kaiser!

Beginning on December 12, the North Dakota troops at Hoboken embarked for a twelve-day voyage to England. Ironically, most of them would travel aboard the plush accommodations of the Vaterland, a German luxury liner, one of largest passenger ships afloat. When America entered the war many German vessels were caught in port and were confiscated by the War Department. Although the German crews attempted to scuttle the ships or make them inoperable, most were made sea worthy and put to work transporting men and supplies. The Vaterland was re-christened as the SS Leviathan.

The North Dakota troops, after some additional training, would soon be joining other Americans who had been fighting with the Canadian forces already in the trenches of France. Many of these were from North Dakota, and casualties mounted when the German command made a significant effort to conquer as much territory as possible prior to the arrival of the American Expeditionary Forces.

Across the state, news of the deaths of North Dakotans filled the newspapers, spreading a pall over the holiday season. Soon thousands of young men from North Dakota communities would be in combat. It was the Christmas season, a time to rejoice, but, as F. L. Wardwell, of the Pembina Pioneer had prophesied so many months before, "We do not recognize the war demon until he comes near enough to see his red garment... We are about entering into the gates of hell, that fathers, brothers, sons and lovers may soon be weltering in blood on the fields of carnage." The face of the war had changed...the face of Christmas had changed.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, December 20, 1917

The Washburn Leader, December 21, 1917

Williston Graphic, December 20, 1917

Christmas, 1917

December 25, 2017

For the Red Cross, December of 1917 was an active season in North Dakota. With loved ones ever closer to the front, there was an urgency to ensure that the boys had the comforts of home as much as possible. Red Cross knitting parties were held across the state. In a three-week campaign, over two hundred sweaters were knitted in Eddy County so every soldier from that county would have a warm garment.

Nationwide, the Red Cross was seeking ten million new members in the week prior to Christmas. They asked each household to place a candle in the window behind a piece of transparent paper containing a blue border with a large Red Cross sign in the center. This was to be done at 7:30 on Christmas Eve as a symbol of support for the troops. Church bells would toll every half hour during the evening.

Banking on the spirit of the season, the War Commission was asking Americans to purchase War Saving certificates. The money raised would help buy munitions to hasten the war's end, saving the lives of many American boys, enabling them to spend future Christmases with their families. Christmas, like Thanksgiving, would require some creative planning and sacrifice. Meatless mincemeat was recommended by the Food Commission to accompany the "pumpkinless" pumpkin pie and the "gingerless" gingerbread. The directions were simple. Chop half of a package of raisins with a half-pound of prunes and stew in the juice and peel of a lemon; then add a quarter cup of sweet cider and four tablespoons of brown sugar.

Christmas found the North Dakota troops one step closer to the front. Capable of carrying over eight thousand soldiers comfortably, the SS Leviathan, serving as a troop ship, arrived safely in England on Christmas Eve. Even though the accommodations aboard ship were very comfortable, the threat of submarines in the North Atlantic had kept the men awake and vigilant. Many slept in their uniforms with their boots on. A scrumptious Christmas dinner with all the trimmings was served aboard ship, prior to their arrival.

The movement of troops and supplies was a closely guarded secret, so it was not until Christmas Day that the people back home would learn that the North Dakota contingent was on foreign soil. With their loved ones within hours of the front, the Christmas wish of 1917 was for a quick end to the war and their safe return.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Weekly Time-Record, January 24, 1918

Ward County Independent, January 24, 1918

The Bismarck Tribune, December 22, 1917

Somewhere in France

January 10, 2018

With the North Dakota boys now on foreign soil, news from the front was anxiously awaited, but censorship rules had tightened. Most censored items dealt with the general movement of troops and supplies.

The new rules added casualty lists or letters indicating the name of the unit or the location of any soldiers. So, as the heavily censored letters began arriving home, most contained the words, "Somewhere in France."

The North Dakota soldiers in the 164th had moved to the eastern side of England, near Southampton, on Christmas Day. They were then transported across the English Channel during the first week of January.

Meanwhile, another unit from North Dakota, the 116th Engineers, had already arrived in France, having bypassed England to land at Le Havre. It was here that the North Dakota troops would come face to face with their first ugly signs of war, not in combat but in the lack of accommodations and provisions.

They would soon understand the tremendous toll four years of war had exacted on the French and English nations. Twelve to fourteen men were stuffed into tents made to hold six to eight men. Meals were a hunk of bread, bad coffee and a little jam.

But the worst was yet to come. On this date in 1918, the North Dakota troops boarded the French “forty and eight” railroad cars, designed to hold forty men or eight horses. They were transferred to La Courtine, located approximately two hundred miles south of Paris. Upon their arrival, almost four thousand privates from the 41st Division were transferred to the 1st Division as replacements.

The 1st Division had arrived in France in June of 1917. Quickly organized upon America’s entry into the war, it was understaffed, and now, after six months of combat, was in dire need of replacements. The original plans had been to put each division through a four-month training cycle, but the need for replacements countermanded this. Entire companies of the 164th and the 116th would soon find themselves in the front line trenches.

With their fighting strength greatly reduced, the 164th and the 116th Engineers were assigned to the logistical and headquarters units of the American Expeditionary Force. They were located one hundred twenty-five miles east of Paris. Unknown to the folks back home, almost four thousands members of the First and Second North Dakota Regiments sent gloriously off to war in September of 1917, and still lacking any combat training, were now scattered with front line units “somewhere in France.”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Citizens as Soldiers, A History of the North Dakota National Guard, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1986.

The Bismarck Tribune, January 12, 1918

Jamestown Weekly Alert, January 10, 1918

Special Session

January 23, 2018

Citing extraordinary conditions unparalleled in the history of our country, and a need to secure sufficient seed and feed for maximum agriculture production, Governor Lynn J. Frazier called for a Special Legislative Session on this date in 1918.

The main thrust of the session was to provide and expand bonding authority for counties to obtain seed grain for the upcoming year. Persistent drought over the previous two years had depleted the supply of seed grains and livestock feed at a critical time with the war raging in Europe. Over fifty percent of North Dakota counties were short on seed, and with several years

of diminished income due to crop failures, farmers could ill afford to purchase what was available. Counties were in need of a bonding ability to procure funds for the purchase of seed and feed grains to make them available for the use of farmers within their boundaries. There was also a need to establish an office of a State Inspector for Grades, Weights and Measures, to ensure the fair grading of grains.

The special session also included other bills. The senate introduced twenty-one and the House seventeen, but only fourteen made it through. A resolution was passed for National Prohibition, as well as laws establishing absentee voting for military personnel. The budget and regulations for a State Council of Defense were enacted. Another bill involved a moratorium on farm mortgage payments for military personnel. With many young men in the military service unable to properly operate their farms, they were unable to meet the demands of their mortgage, and foreclosures were increasing. The moratorium would extend for the duration of the war and a reasonable time thereafter. Another bill provided an emergency appropriation for the State Hospital.

With the National Guard in federal service, an attempt to establish a state militia was unsuccessful, with the Home Guard units across the state considered adequate. But the legislature did enact a law defining sabotage, with punishments ranging from one year to life in prison.

With North Dakota troops now in the front-line trenches, the special session accomplished what it set out to do – protect the rights of military servicemen and promote maximum food production for the war effort, with the hope of bringing the boys home as quickly as possible.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

“Journal of the House of the Special Session of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly,” Bismarck Tribune Publishing Company, 1918

“Journal of the Senate of the Special Session of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly,” Bismarck Tribune Publishing Company, 1918

“Laws Passed at the Special Session of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly of the State of North Dakota,” Bismarck Tribune Publishing Company, 1918

Tag your shovel day

January 30, 2018

During the Great War, many items were needed for the troops fighting halfway across the world. This put a strain on items back on the home front – so limits and strictures were placed on items such as foods, metal, and fuel. In a program to encourage conservation, on this date in 1918, North Dakota observed “tag your shovel day” in cooperation with the US Fuel Administration. Community youth were enlisted to “tag” coal shovels throughout the state with a note inscribed: “Save that Shovelful of Coal a Day for Uncle Sam.” The back also listed some hints for saving coal.

This was supposed to be different from other drives because the youth did not ask for donations, but instead they asked “that householders save money...for food, for war savings stamps, for liberty bonds, and at the same time add to the government’s coal pile.”

Captain I.P. Baker was federal fuel administrator for North Dakota, and he noted that this tag should “work like a string around your finger or a knot in your handkerchief – it will be a constant reminder of something not to be forgotten.”

North Dakota received a quarter of a million tags to attach to shovels, distributed to every school in the state, with school children making it their solemn duty to distribute the notes with diligence and speed to everyone. A. W. Lucas, president of the Bismarck City Commission, found a tag on his shovel, but never saw who placed it. Col. C. B. Little was given his tag by the son of L. L. Folsom, who was a well-known jeweler in Bismarck.

Governor Frazier’s shovel was one of the first to be tagged. His twin daughters, Unie and Versie, who were in the eighth grade at Bismarck Junior High School, tagged his shovel themselves, early in the morning. The Bismarck Tribune reported, “Every time that Governor Frazier or the janitor or such other person as may have occasion to stoke the gubernatorial furnace in the North Dakota executive mansion seizes the trusty coal shovel which has played its share in making it hot for a number of Flickertail chief executives, he is confronted with ... Save that Shovelful of Coal for Uncle Sam.”

Throughout the state, two hundred thousand school children were “enlisted in the service of Uncle Sam, to ‘save and win the war.’“

By Sarah Walker

Sources:

January 30, 1918, p. 4 Bismarck evening Tribune

January 4, 1918, p3, Bismarck Tribune

January 28, 1918, p1, Bismarck Tribune

January 31, 1918, p8, Courier Democrat

January 10, 1918, p7, The Weekly Times-Record

January 22, 1918, p1, The Bismarck Tribune

February 4, 1918, p8, The Bismarck Tribune

Louis Ousley, First Casualty Over There February 2, 2018

In December of 1917, George M. Cohan’s little ditty, “Over There,” was sold to a New York publisher for \$25,000. Representing a payment of \$161 a word or \$138 a note, it became the highest payment per word for any composition up to that time.

This leaped significantly ahead of a \$2-per-word payment for an article written by Theodore Roosevelt, its next closest rival. And compared to a complete Puccini opera of that era, “Over There” topped it by a whopping \$10,000.

The song promised that with drums rum-tumming, the Yanks were coming, and they wouldn't come home until it's over, over there. This came to symbolize America's commitment to the war and the patriotic fever of the American soldier.

By the middle of January of 1918, the North Dakota boys were over there. Companies of the 1st and 2nd North Dakota regiments, splintered and scattered, were quickly sent as replacements for the weary, battle-depleted troops who arrived with Gen Pershing back in July of 1917. It was only a matter of time before the casualty lists came back with familiar names from North Dakota.

Private Louis Ousley was from Wilton. With his brother Lawrence, he had joined Company A of the Second Regiment, originally stationed to protect the railroad bridge at Camp Frazier in Bismarck before shipping off to France. While it was true that other soldiers from North Dakota had died with the Canadian forces or from disease, it was on this date in 1918 that Louis Oulsey became the first soldier from North Dakota regiments to be killed in action.

Ousley was with a small detachment in an advanced position in "No Man's Land," a killing zone situated between the trenches of the battling forces, when they came under heavy machine gun and artillery fire. As they retreated, the lieutenant leading the squad was severely wounded. Ousley tossed his weapon to another soldier and, oblivious to the rifle and machine gun fire, he raced back and hoisted the officer on his shoulder.

Stumbling through the mud and debris, he picked his way through the shell craters. As he neared the safety of the American trenches, he was hit with a burst of shrapnel. His comrades completed the rescue of the officer and then secured Oulsey's lifeless body. The wounded officer survived, and North Dakota's first casualty was a hero. As in Cohan's song, "Hoist the flag and let her fly, Like true heroes, do or die." For Private Louis Ousley, it was over... over there.

By Jim Davis

Wheatless & Meatless

February 7, 2018

With thousands of American troops now at the front in France on this date in 1918, food conservation had become critical. A new guide was issued which called for at least one wheatless meal each day except Monday when no wheat products were allowed.

Tuesday was a meatless day, and most days required at least one meal without meat. No pork products were allowed on Saturday. All sugar and fats were to be used sparingly, but potatoes and other vegetables were not restricted. Public eating houses were allowed to sell pies, doughnuts, cookies and other pastries on wheatless Monday as long as they contained one-third wheat flour substitutes. This included corn meal, corn flour and cornstarch, and products made from rice, barley, oats, soybeans, potatoes, sweet potatoes and buckwheat.

The responsibility to adhere to these regulations rested not only on the housewife, but also on the retailers. Dr. E. F. Ladd, the North Dakota food administrator, issued a warning to retailers that noncompliance could mean the loss of their retail license. Retailers were allowed to sell only

twenty-four to forty-nine pounds of flour per family living in town. Families in the country were allowed forty-nine to ninety-eight pounds, and ranchers coming from a long distance could obtain a barrel of flour, but not to exceed a sixty-day supply. And, for each seven pounds of flour, three pounds of flour substitute were required to be sold.

Sugar was also heavily regulated. Home consumption was limited to three pounds per person per month, though purchasing a two-month supply was okay. Farmers and ranchers who traveled greater distances and may have farm and ranch hands to feed, could obtain even longer-lasting supplies in one trip – fifty to one hundred pounds.

Dr. Melvin Gilmore of the State Historical Society of North Dakota believed that self-reliance on resources long available in North Dakota could ease the burden of food conservation. Just as lignite coal has helped ease the coal shortage, if North Dakotans developed a taste for corn, which local Native tribes had used as a staple for centuries, it could reduce the need for wheat.

Although the state was relatively treeless, large groves of box elders were common. A relative of the sugar maple, box elders could be used as a source of sugar, if tapped in the coming spring. Gilmore believed that by studying Native American customs, North Dakotans could become less dependent upon scarce commodities. It was their patriotic duty in a time of war.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Valley City Times-Record, February 7, 1918

Bismarck Tribune, February 13, 1918

Fargo Forum, February 25, 1918

Sandy-Haired Bismarck Boy

February 14, 2018

With the North Dakota boys manning the trenches on the front lines on this date in 1918, local newspapers were carefully scrutinized, hoping that the name of a loved one would not appear on the latest causality list.

On February 1st, the Associated Press carried a story on an unnamed soldier who had been wounded during a German raid on a little village in France. He told the correspondent that after being drafted, he had come to France with a division of former National Guardsmen. He had only been in France for a few weeks. The reporter described him as covered in mud from head to foot – a sandy-haired youth from a farm near Bismarck.

After being hit in the leg with shrapnel and undergoing surgery, the soldier stated that there were only two things he really wanted. One was to get another chance to fight the Bosch and do the job he came there for. For his second wish, he stated he would give two month's pay for a large beefsteak smothered in onions.

When the story was circulated nationally by the Associated Press, the young man had mothers to spare. Every woman around Bismarck with a drafted son was absolutely sure this was her boy. One woman stated that her son was “always crazy to get over there and take a shot at the Bosch.”

Another woman based her claim on the beefsteak and onions and that there was not another boy in France who could eat as much as her boy. There was even one woman from Chicago, who claimed that the young man was her sandy-haired brother, Henry Vogelmann, who, when last heard from, was working on a farm near Bismarck.

Unfortunately, the individual's identity was never confirmed, but most believed it was Corporal Joe Matthews. He had been wounded in the same battle that took the life of Louis Oulsey, the first North Dakota Guardsman to die in France. Although Matthews survived the war, and was seriously wounded three times, he also had achieved the dubious honor of being one of North Dakota's most-killed soldiers, having been reported as killed in action several times.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, February 6, 1918

Ibid: February 19, 1918

Valley City Weekly Times=Record, February 22, 1918

The Bismarck Tribune, September 06, 1919

YMCA

February 28, 2018

In September of 1917, the North Dakota Regiments left the state to the training camps in the East. They found comfort there in the YMCA huts in the large cantonments. These huts provided an escape from the rigors of military life for the homesick boys -- many had never been away from their families before.

By the end of January of 1918, the First and Second North Dakota Regiments were on the battlefields of France and most of their companies had been stripped and transferred to other regiments. This eroded the camaraderie and support of longtime friends.

E. H. Tostevin wrote home from a YMCA hut somewhere in France, near enough to the front to hear the guns boom. He said his surroundings brought back the memories of the old town hall with the air reeking with tobacco smoke and other odors. Frayed bunting, calendars, highly colored posters all helped to add a little cheer. The YMCA hut was a wooden building, 50 by 100 feet, with 48 tables lining the walls, sitting six at a table. Cheery open fireplaces, books, magazines and phonographs provided refuge away from the front.

He wrote that a shadow of gloom spread over the North Dakota boys from the loss of two of their comrades, but that the men were forgetting their hardships and the gnawing hunger for home as there was music in the air. The North Dakota 164th orchestra cut loose with popular hits from a year ago, music that the boys remembered. It brought back fond memories of when they danced back home with their own special girl, and yet, Tostevin said that it seemed to soothe rather than augment the longing for when peace shall send them back to their loved ones.

He recalled a night when there was no special program so they instituted what the Tommies, or British troops, called a "sing." They passed around sheets of paper containing song lyrics and the

orchestra provided the music. For two hours, almost 500 soldiers sang old favorites such as “Onward Christian Soldiers” or “Rock of Ages.” So popular was music at the front that Brigadier General Hunter Liggett, commander of I Corp of the American Expeditionary Force, refused to allow the North Dakota Second Regimental Band to be split up, stating, “That band is worth a million dollars to the United States Army.” But to the North Dakota soldiers, in the YMCA huts at the front, it was worth more than that; it provided a vital link to home.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Valley City Weekly Times-Record, February 28, 1918.

Emmons County Record, March 14, 1918.

Kaiser’s Goat

March 5, 2018

On this date in 1918 there was a goat traveling around Fargo, quickly going from one owner to the next. “Get the Kaiser’s Goat” was a unique method for encouraging the sale of War Thrift Stamps.

Consisting of a large portrait of an evil looking billy goat with the inscription “Der Kaiser’s Goat”, the package included a book in which the names of the Goat Getters were recorded as it was passed from one person to the next. Before the goat could be passed on, a subscription of War Thrift Stamps ranging from twenty-five cents to ten dollars a month for the rest of the year had to be promised by the holder. New members also called in to the committee to record their pledge and to track the progress of the goat.

The idea originated with the Fargo Forum and was further developed by Walter Cushing and Joe Pierce of the War Saving Stamps Committee of Cass County. The initial drive began on at 12:00 PM on March 2nd when A. W. Cupler, chairman of the Cass County committee, sent the goat on its journey. The Order of the Goat Getters was so successful that it garnered twenty-seven members in the first hour raising over two hundred dollars in pledges. To ensure that the pledges were honored, the committee collected them at the end of each month.

An additional element of fun was implemented in which the individual who was in possession of the goat at noon of each day was declared “Grand Goat of the Day” and he who had the goat at sunset was declared “Supreme Goat of the Night.”

So successful was the campaign that Fargo collected over fifteen hundred dollars in pledges for each month through the end of the year. Other cities in North Dakota soon followed Fargo’s lead and established corrals. Within weeks, the novel idea had spread across the United States. Orders for the Kaiser’s Goat came in from across the nation within days after an Associated Press article on Fargo’s success hit the newspapers. Many developed their own ideas using goat replicas instead of the portrait, and in Fargo and other communities, more than one goat made the rounds.

It was a simple, fun idea and by the end of the first month it was estimated to have generated one hundred thousand dollars nationally in the sales of Thrift Stamps per month. One Indiana newspaper proclaimed that Kaiser’s Goat was the “Goat that made Fargo Famous.”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Fargo Forum, March 2, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, March 4, 1918

The Richland Palladium and Sun Telegram, Richland, Indiana March 20, 1918

Jamestown Weekly Alert, April 4, 1918

Devils Lake World and Inter-Ocean March 27, 1918

Casualty Lists

March 14, 2018

Early in the war, the newspapers in North Dakota carried casualty lists containing only meaningless names or numbers. But by this date in 1918, that changed. The death of Louis Ousley from Wilton in early February brought home the fact that the men from the North Dakota Regiments were now in the front line trenches. The news from the battlefields, more and more, echoed from house to house across the state the war was no longer an alien concept. It now invaded the innermost thoughts of family and loved ones.

Most of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the 164th, the North Dakota Regiment, had become part of the Headquarters Company and were out of harm's way. However, the casualty list for March 14th had the names of multiple North Dakota soldiers killed in action in France. It included Fred Gard and Hans Larson of Crosby; Claude Keller of Glenburn, and Frank Alidak of Minot. These men were among eighteen hundred former 164th Regiment privates transferred to other units. They became the first casualties.

Martin Olstad of Kathryn, in Barnes County, who survived the war, became part of the 1st Machine Gun Battalion and in mid March found himself at the front with more experienced British and French troops. He came under immediate, unrelenting artillery fire and gas attacks as the Germans mounted their spring offensive near the Somme River. After seven days his unit was relieved and sent to Cantigny for the first major American offensive of the war. He spent thirty-six days in the trenches, again under constant shelling.

But just as North Dakota's soldiers began entering the trenches, the War Department announced that casualty lists would no longer carry the addresses of the men. They claimed that this information allowed the Germans to map troop movements. The Department began providing only the names of casualties nationwide. This caused great consternation. People might see a familiar looking name, but not know if it was a loved one. It would take weeks to overturn this decision.

F. W. Wardwell had made a prediction in the Pembina Pioneer almost a year earlier. He said, "It takes blood to make people understand what war means and what war is." With the casualty lists coming in, for North Dakota that time had come. The blood and carnage of war, which seemed so far away a year earlier, now was a reality. The face of war had changed, as the casualty lists brought the war home to loved ones in North Dakota.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Fargo Forum, March 9, 1918

The Pioneer Express, April 13, 1917.

Grand Forks Herald, March 04, 1918

Sioux County Pioneer, March 14, 1918

The Kathryn Recorder, February 6, 1919

Loyalist Association

March 23, 2018

In 1918, with the casualty lists now containing the names of North Dakota soldiers, any anti-war sentiment was not to be tolerated. The Fargo Forum had warned back in November of 1917, that news of wounds and death would stifle dissent in homes across the state. Tensions ran high, and North Dakota residents of German birth had to be extremely cautious of the slightest word or deed that might imply loyalty to Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany. According to Judge John Knauf from Jamestown, people who shared his heritage of German birth or ancestry were eyed suspiciously. It didn't help that many still spoke German.

At his request, residents of German heritage gathered in Jamestown this week in 1918, to pledge their support for the war effort and to manifest their patriotism. Meeting at the Jamestown Armory, they represented every county in the state and almost every occupation, including professional men, farmers, laborers, and businessmen. The delegates soon developed a constitution and set up committees to establish resolutions and bylaws. The organization became known as the Loyalist Association. They hoped to diminish any doubts of their loyalty. The objectives were chiefly to support the government issues of bonds and certificates, and aid the Red Cross, the Y. M. C. A., the Knights of Columbus, and to participate in pro-war efforts.

Camil Kramer of LaMoure County spoke at the convention. He came to North Dakota in 1882. He stated that people of German heritage have given money, their sons, their blood, for their country – the United States of America. He noted, "Kaiser Wilhelm himself, has said there are no German-Americans, either they are Germans, or else they are Americans." Kramer then stated, "Let us all be Americans!" But he cautioned, "I do hope that you don't lose your respect for the German people in this country."

Within a month, members of the association had journeyed to most of the predominantly German areas of the state. Providing patriotic literature in German, and speaking in German and English, they told what was truly happening in order to counteract the pro-Kaiser rhetoric of the German newspapers. Condemning any anti-patriotic activities, the Loyalist Association was able quell the tension and create pro-war unity among the state's German communities.

By Dr. Steve Hoffbeck, MSU Moorhead History Department

Jamestown Weekly Alert, March 21, 1918

Ibid, April 11, 1918

Wartime News

March 27, 2018

Throughout the first year after America entered the war in 1917, the War Department maintained a strict censorship on the news from France. To keep the public informed, there were brief war news presentations from the Committee on Public Information by the Four Minute Men.

These were volunteers authorized to speak at movie theaters and public meetings on timely topics related to the war. Often speaking between the film reel changes at theaters, their speeches were restricted to four minutes, thus the name. Using local community leaders who were provided with general topic guidelines, it was a successful approach in promoting public support for the war.

But it was mostly through the Associated Press that the public learned the general war news. In the fall and winter of 1917-1918, due to the nature of trench warfare, successful campaigns were often measured in yards, not miles.

However, German losses in men and equipment were slowly bleeding the German Army's strength; and North Dakotans, like most Americans, hoped for an early end to the war. In mid-March the German command mounted a spring offensive in an all-out effort to gain as much territory as possible before the American Expeditionary Forces could become an effective part of the war. The news from the front in late March of 1918 was dismal as the French and British forces, which included some American units, appeared to be in retreat.

In the evening of Saturday, March 23rd, the Ward County Independent issued an extra edition, which stated that General Haig and the British lines had stemmed the German advance. A large crowd of several hundred enthusiastic citizens gathered in the streets of Minot to celebrate. Speeches were given and the band played patriotic tunes. However, a few hours later, the Minot Daily News, in its edition, denied the story based on new information.

An angry crowd, dissatisfied with this development, gathered in front of the Daily News office. During the night the front entrance to the building was painted yellow, and the words "Kaiser" and "Slacker" were painted on the doors and windows.

The newspaper responded by posting a one hundred dollar reward for the names of the individuals who vandalized the building. They also posted a reward for the identity of the individual who submitted a story to the Fargo Forum that charged them with disloyalty, but they offered no apology for reporting their version of the news. It was what it was – good or bad.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Devils Lake World and Inter-Ocean March 27, 1918

Bismarck Tribune March 25, 1918

Ward County Independent, March 28, 1918

The Soldier Tobacco Fund

March 29, 2018

The first 14,000 American troops arrived in France on June 26, 1917, but most of the American forces arrived the following year. By July 1918 there were one million American soldiers in Europe.

They continued to arrive at the rate of about 10,000 a day until they numbered 1.8 million. On this date in 1918, the Washburn Leader announced that the newspaper was participating in a program that would provide comfort to the American soldiers at the front – the Soldier Tobacco Fund. The paper urged readers to “do your two bits and send a kit to a soldier boy.” The article reminded readers that soldiers were enduring hardships that were beyond imagining. In urging readers to support every soldier, the newspaper said, “A good smoke is one of the little things he ought not be denied.”

The program would bring a little cheer to the soldiers and remind them that they were not forgotten. For a donation of twenty-five cents, the newspaper would send a smoke kit to a soldier. Each kit contained cigarettes, matches, and a postcard addressed to the person who donated it. The soldier could write a personal note of thanks and send it. The Red Cross agreed to deliver the kits. The French government helped by allowed the tobacco into the country duty-free. The French and British postal departments would handle the one-cent postcards. The American Tobacco Company was supporting the program by sending forty-five cents of tobacco for each donation.

A 1915 British poster shows soldiers smoking outside a damaged church. The poster urges, “Let us make every effort and see that they are never in want of pipes and tobacco.” The American program was inspired by the British. Newspapers across the country supported the program, urging readers to participate. The Mount Stirling Advocate of Mount Stirling, Kentucky told readers they should “Smoke Out the Kaiser.”

In August 1917, the Times Dispatch of Richmond, Virginia noted that the Soldiers Tobacco Fund was gaining headway. The Washburn Leader noted that, “Scarcely a letter has been received from the boys [that doesn’t] ask for American tobacco.”

By Carole Butcher

Sources:

Washburn Leader. “The Leader Starts Soldier Tobacco Fund.” Washburn, ND. 29 March 1918. Page 2.

Mount Stirling Advocate. “Smoke Out the Kaiser.” Mount Stirling, KY. 25 September 1917. Page 10.

Times Dispatch. “Soldiers’ Tobacco Fund Gains Much Headway.” Richmond VA. 19 August 1917. Page 13.

The First World War East Sussex. “American Soldiers Arrive in France.”

<http://www.eastsussexww1.org.uk/american-soldiers-arrive-france/> Accessed 2/8/2018.

Library of Congress. “Sailors and Soldiers Tobacco Fund poster.”

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003675365/> Accessed 2/8/2018.

Journal-World. “World War I in Lawrence.” <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2017/nov/05/world-war-i-lawrence-journal-world-starts-tobacco-/> Accessed 2/8/2018.

Daylight Savings

April 4, 2018

One hundred years ago, serial stories of the war, such as “Over the Top” as well as Associated Press articles, provided details of life in the front line trenches, creating a vivid picture of the war for people back home.

They also described the ebb and flow of the battle lines, further defining the horrors of war. As the North Dakota boys entered the trenches, The Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A. and the Salvation Army saw their support increase, as these organizations provided comfort for the boys when they came off the line. And of course, there were the packages from home. So plentiful were the packages that the War Department issued a directive. Unless they were accompanied by an approved request from the soldier himself, these bundles were to be refused by the Post Office.

German submarines were playing havoc in the shipping lanes, and transportation of the necessities of war limited the available space. They noted that most of the goods being sent from home were readily available in France via the Army canteens.

But on this date in 1918, people across the state were struggling with another new law that created a great deal of confusion. The first Daylight Saving Time took effect on March 31st. Congress believed that setting the clock ahead one hour would conserve energy. It would also create millions of productive daylight hours. Workers could complete their work and still have an extra hour of daylight to perform other duties in support of the war. Fearing a significant shortage of food, this hour could be spent tending war gardens.

However, that extra hour of daylight proved quite a problem for many. In Bismarck, two young ladies who went to early Mass at St. Mary’s for Easter Services, sat in an empty church for an hour before the remainder of the congregation filed in. It was noted that throughout the state almost all the churches operated on the old schedule.

Many who had dinner reservations, who arrived on the new time, surprised their noncompliant hosts, while many other guests, who failed to adopt the new time, arrived just in time for the desert. According to a farmer at Edgeley who puzzled over this daylight savings plan, it just didn’t work all that well. He wondered is somebody could devise some means of setting his flock of roosters ahead one hour.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Ward County Independent, April 18, 1918

Wahpeton Times, April 18, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, March 28, 1918

War Exhibit

April 12, 2018

April 6, 1918 marked the one-year anniversary of America’s entrance into the Great War. In many of North Dakota’s towns and cities, impressive celebrations were held to recognize the dedicated, patriotic effort that had engulfed the state over the past twelve months.

Despite a drizzling rain, Bismarck's parade encompassed every organization directly involved in the war, including the Red Cross and the YMCA. Approximately one hundred miners from Wilton representing the United Mine Worker Union marched behind a sign that stated, "Keep the Home Fires Burning - with Lignite." In Dickinson, over a thousand people marched in a parade including the Home Guard and the ladies auxiliary known as the Bloomer Brigade.

Liberty Day, as it was called, was also the launch day of the Third Liberty Loan in an attempt to raise a minimum of three billion dollars for the war effort. Although there had been bond issues before, this bond drive was different in that now there was American blood being spilled on the battlefields of France. It took men and money to win the war and bring the boys home. So, across the state it was not a matter of attempting to raise the money, it was a race to see who could fill their quota first.

To provide Americans with a clearer understanding of the battlefields in France, the Federal Reserve conceived the idea of touring thirty-four trophy trains. Each unit would consist of two flat cars to display machine guns, cannons and other heavy ordinance; a coach car to display smaller artifacts and documents; and a sleeper car to provide lodging for soldiers – veterans of the front lines – who explained the exhibits.

Melvin Gilmore, curator of collections for the State Historical Society, had conceived a similar idea.

Gilmore amassed an array of artifacts from the war zone to exhibit in the Historical Museum in the basement of the Capitol Building. Notable among these artifacts was a collection from Lt. Sidney G. Mason from Buffalo, North Dakota, who was an ambulance driver on the battlefields. This consisted of a French helmet, as well as gas masks, ammunition belts, and cartridge clips from both sides, and a belt for an aerial machine gun. There was also a French signal pistol used to shoot flares at the start of an attack ... sending men "over the top." Gilmore's collection also included many war posters and documents. It was an impressive and very popular exhibit. Many of these artifacts are currently on display at the North Dakota Heritage Center.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, April 4, 1918

Ibid, April 8, 1918

Fargo Forum and Daily Republican, April 6, 1918

Conscientious Objector

April 17, 2018

"They can come and take me and put me in prison or kill me, but they can't make me fight. God's against war, and it isn't right."

These words, uttered by Richard Francis Anderson in August of 1917, marked a six-month, soul-searching battle for the young man from Wilton.

When his name was drawn in the draft, he refused to go, citing his moral convictions. Physically, he was a strapping six-footer and he easily passed the medical examination, but he sincerely believed that the taking of a man's life was morally wrong. He did not belong to any religious denomination opposed to war, and he had no political convictions or leanings towards the Kaiser. When he appeared before the local draft board he calmly assured them that they could take him away, but there were not enough men in America to make him fight. He became North Dakota's first conscientious objector.

At a time when patriotism was running high, and those who opposed the war were deemed "Slackers," Mr. Anderson's words were published in the newspapers across the state and he was condemned by the press. But he stood by his convictions. The local draft board, convinced of his sincerity, suggested leniency.

Perhaps it was the influence of family and friends, or perhaps the battlefield death of his friend, Louis Ousley, but on February 20, 1918, two days after the memorial tribute to Private Ousley, Richard Francis Anderson appeared before the Burleigh County draft board of his own volition and was inducted into the United States Army. He then boarded a train for Camp Dodge, Iowa and was assigned to Battery D of the 339th Field Artillery.

We will never know how he would have fared when tested on the battlefields of France, because seven weeks after entering the service, Private Richard Anderson was dead, a victim of pneumonia. The remains were returned to Wilton under military escort. He was well respected in the community, and an impressive military funeral was conducted by the Wilton Home Guard. A large crowd of mourners accompanied the remains to the cemetery. A man of high religious and moral convictions, he had come to terms with his conscience. The name Private Richard Francis Anderson was proudly enshrined in North Dakota's Honor Roll of fallen soldiers.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Wilton News, April 12, 1918

Ibid, April 19, 1918

The Bismarck Tribune, August 8, 1917

The Devils Lake World and Inter-Ocean, August 16, 1917

Trench Warfare

April 26, 2018

Soon after they arrived in France, privates in the North Dakota Regiments were often separated from their units and spirited to the front as replacements. Lacking any combat training, it was baptism under fire.

Many, such as Anton Peterson from Fargo, or Frank Midak and Raymond Gillette of Minot, found themselves in Ansauville, France approximately six kilometers from the front.

The men from North Dakota soon settled into a routine where they worked on the trenches by night and rested during the day. Soldiers waded knee-deep through mud and water, often crawling from shell hole to shell hole to avoid detection. Soaked to the skin and covered with

mud, they stood watch through the constant roar of exploding shells, as artillery and flares illuminated the “no man’s land” between the trenches. With trenches only seventy-five yards apart, constant shelling from either side took its toll. The heaviest barrages came during the night as patrols snaked through the shell craters, cutting through the barbed wire to study enemy positions or conduct raids. All troop movements and resupply was conducted under the cover of darkness. Chow time in the trenches was at midnight. Bread was scarce. Anton Peterson complained there was only enough to feed a grasshopper for one day. Most of the food, including coffee, was brought to the front in cream cans. Troops occasionally went several days without food. Cigarettes were scarce.

Cold, spring rains filled the trenches and heavy artillery bombardments often made the trenches impassable. Any exposure along the line, including sticking their heads up to look for enemy movement, could result in instant death by sniper fire. The stench from rotting corpses filled the air, as did the smell of poisonous gas. Trench foot was common and lice infected their bodies, spreading disease.

The 18th Infantry spent two months at the front where Frank Midak died from an artillery burst. They were then relieved and removed to the rear. Arriving in Traveray, Peterson and a buddy bought two dozen eggs, cheese, butter, bread and jam and had a feast. They also had their first bath and change of clothes since they had arrived at Ansauville.

After a brief rest, they passed through Paris and, on this date in 1918, they entered the trenches at Cantigny. It was here that the American Expeditionary Forces would mount their first major offensive. For the North Dakota boys, things were about to get worse.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Ward County Independent, April 18, 1918

War History Commission, Series 30504, Box 1 State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Tosti

May 1, 2018

100 years ago, North Dakota boys were now in the thick of the fighting in France. A decision of the Department of War to publish casualty lists without providing the hometowns of the soldiers created a great deal of anxiety for the families of soldiers with similar names.

The outcry prompted President Wilson to overrule that decision, and on this date in 1918, the names and hometowns of the killed, wounded or missing once again filled the columns of local newspapers. Letters with troop locations or battlefield engagements were still highly censored, so information from the front remained very limited and of a general nature.

Although the news was restricted, the people of North Dakota had their own war correspondent, affectionately known as Tosti. Earle Herbert Tostevin was the city editor of the Mandan Pioneer when he enlisted with the North Dakota National Guard on September 29th, 1917. Immediately upon his induction, Col. John Fraine, Commander of the Guard, authorized Tostevin to write stories of the North Dakota boys’ daily life, and those columns appeared regularly in a number of

state newspapers. His perspective of the war was unique, as he moved with his unit from camp to camp and eventually to France. Unlike the Associated Press correspondents, his movements were restricted to the confines of his deployment.

Each column began with the same words, “Somewhere in France.” The first overseas column was written on January 16th, and appeared in North Dakota newspapers the second week of February. This provided the first news of the breakup of North Dakota’s 164th infantry regiment, and that the units had moved closer to the trenches. Tosti’s columns provided insight to help curb the anxiety of families back home.

After receiving a medical disability, Earle was shifted to duty as a correspondent with Stars and Stripes, the American military newspaper. He returned from duty overseas in February of 1919, resuming his career at the Mandan Pioneer. In 1933, friends and family were stunned when Earle suddenly died. He was only 43 years old.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald, April 15, 1918

Bismarck Tribune, February 11, 1918

Jamestown Weekly Alert, September 27, 1917

Bismarck Tribune, May 3, 1918

Mandan Historical Society: <http://www.mandanhistory.org/biographiessz/earletostevin.html>

Lincoln Republicans

May 8, 2018

In the spring of 1918, with the war raging in France, another battle was playing out in the political landscape of North Dakota. In a few short years, the Nonpartisan League, led by Arthur C. Townley, had taken control of state government.

Tired of big business and big money making the laws, Townley was able to launch a successful farmer’s revolt in the 1914 elections, and he increased his power in the elections of 1916. In the 1917 legislative session, the NPL introduced House Bill 44, an authorization to rewrite the State Constitution. Although it easily passed in the House, a more cautious Senate laid it on the table and it stalled. An unsuccessful attempt to revive this bill was made during a special session the following year. If the bill was to pass, it would have given Townley and his supporters the opportunity to revise the Constitution to make it better reflect their socialistic philosophy.

At this same time, the NPL was coming under fire for their anti-war propaganda, and many National NPL leaders were banned from speaking in towns across the state. With North Dakota boys dying in the battlefields in France, this anti-war rhetoric was dimming the luster of the organization and the strong farmer support was beginning to waver.

On May 1st a new organization was created in Minot called the Lincoln Republican League.

Composed of stalwart members of a somewhat dismantled Republican Party, they joined with three other groups – the State Legislative Campaign Committee, the Independent Political Association, and the North Dakota Farmer’s League. The league had but one objective in mind.

George Sommes of Crosby put it this way: “In this city three years ago was born the movement which has placed the state in the hands of irresponsible men. We have come back to Minot to end that movement. The Nonpartisan League was born here and it is proper that we should bury it where the cradle stood.”

On this date in 1918, the Lincoln Republican League was meeting in Jamestown where N. T. Headalen was elected Chairman, Theodore Koefel secretary and John E. Davis treasurer. They organized into districts and began selecting candidates for the upcoming elections. To unify the organization and, some say, to reach across the aisle to Democrats, a new name was chosen. Now known as the Independent Voters Association, it began an uphill battle to defeat the still powerful Nonpartisan League.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald, May 1, 1918

Ibid: May 9, 1918

Ward County Independent, May 9, 1918

Manchurian Railroad

May 17, 2018

On this date in 1918, the Great War was raging, and North Dakota boys were fighting in the front-line trenches. The first three years of the war had shown that when modern weapons for conducting warfare met older tactics, the losses were staggering. Germany was beginning a new spring offensive.

But for one North Dakotan, his overseas duty was a more exotic adventure. Tucked away in a little mentioned corner of the war, Lt. W. T. Hiatt, had been experiencing Eastern cultures. Hiatt was a former dispatcher with the Great Northern Railroad at Minot, who was recruited as an engineer for the American Railroad Commission. This commission had been sent to Eastern Russia, assigned with the task of organizing and improving the Russian railroad system. They traveled first to Honolulu, studying the Russian language on the way, and then journeyed to Vladivostok. Due to the Russian Revolution, they were turned away, instead making their way to Nagasaki. The Japanese were allies with the United States and Britain.

At the beginning of the war, Japan had driven Germany from Shandong Province in China, and then aligned with the Allies in hopes of obtaining more German held territory as well as a part of the Chinese mainland. As guests of the Japanese government, the Americans in Nagasaki were treated to theater presentations, banquets and social gatherings.

In late February, Lt. Hiatt again returned to the mainland, arriving first in Korea and then on to Chang Chun, Manchuria. Approximately two hundred and twenty members of the American Railroad Commission were allowed to enter Manchuria to help improve the portion of the Trans-Siberian Railway not held by the Bolsheviks. Chinese laborers were used on the railroad and also shipped to the European battlefields to dig trenches and perform other war related jobs amid less than ideal conditions. Hiatt assisted on a train containing fifteen boxcars, eighteen feet long, each

containing approximately one hundred Chinese men, women and children destined for the war gardens in Siberia.

By the end of the war, Lt William T. Hiatt and F W. Strange, also from Minot, along with other member of the American Railroad Commission had been successful in implementing significant changes on the Russian railroad system, thereby improving the transportation of men and supplies to the front. After a successful tour in Manchuria, W.T. Hiatt returned home, where, among other things, he played trombone in the Minot Community Band.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Ward County Independent, May 9, 1918

Ibid: August 29, 1918

Ibid: September 21, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, November 22, 1918

Work or War

May 22, 2018

On this date in 1918, the last quota of the selective service draft initiated in June the preceding year was being processed. Thirteen hundred men from North Dakota were set to board trains headed for Fort Lewis, Washington. But for those who were not drafted, there would be no leisure time.

Under a drastic amendment to the Selective Service Act, every man of draft age must find a productive job. It was “Go to work or go to war.” Gamblers and fortune tellers headed the list of unproductive professions, which also included theater ushers, waiters, bartenders, store clerks, domestic servants and even professional baseball players, much to the horror of sports lovers.

While this new federal law was to take effect on July 1st, North Dakota had already enacted its own slacker regulations. No able bodied man between the ages of eighteen and fifty could remain in the state without working a minimum of fifty-four hours in legitimate and productive labor. The measure had a two-part effect. It would get the loafers off the street corners and out of the pool halls to supply the necessary, and scarce, farm labor. At the same time, it effectively removed hobos and the roving bands of Industrial Workers of the World from the countryside.

The IWW was opposed to the war, and its members had developed a reputation as agitators. The fifty-four hour-work week requirement had to be completed in six days, because Sunday closing laws would be heavily enforced. However, some professions, such as railroad workers, automobile garage attendants, and telephone and telegraph personnel, were considered necessary on the Sabbath. Interestingly, so were the operators of popcorn or shoeshine stands!

To ensure that all productive land was being used, the Defense Council issued an order that all land laying idle and owned by a non-resident, could be put to crop. Any local farmer in the vicinity could request use of the idle land if the absentee owner did not put it to use. For this productivity, the farmer could earn from seventy-five to ninety percent of the profits depending upon the scale of work it required.

With these new regulations involving land and labor, the Defense Council ensured that every acre of land would be put to use for food production and every possible man hour could be put to good effect for the war effort. As part of “America’s Breadbasket,” North Dakota was being called upon to help feed the world.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, May 23, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, May 22, 1918

Ibid: May 23, 1918

Jamestown Weekly Alert, May 30, 1918

Memorial Day 1918

May 28, 2018

Today is Memorial Day, a day to honor those who paid the extreme sacrifice in the service of their country.

In 1918, Memorial Day services across the state were held mostly to honor the Civil War veterans who fought for the preservation of the Union. Fifty-three years had passed since the end of the Civil War, and the ranks of the Grand Army of the Republic were quickly thinning as the hands of time continued to claim the old soldiers. With their passing, the memories of the great battles gradually faded. Memorial Day had become more of a head count of Civil War veterans and a reunion for old soldiers. The uniforms would then be put back in moth balls for another year. The Spanish-American war veterans and the Ladies Auxiliary had been instrumental in preserving the holiday’s observance, but the sanctity of the day had diminished.

In 1917, Memorial Day took on new meaning as America entered the Great War, though few North Dakota boys were on foreign soil. A year later, however, the Honor Rolls were beginning to fill, with Gold Stars being placed on homes across the state – the symbol of a fallen hero. As the bands played and the orators spoke of glorious victories of the past, American troops were entering their first major offensive of the war. At the same moment that three hundred young ladies dressed in red, white and blue, marched in Grand Forks in the form of the American flag, North Dakota boys were carrying the flag on French battlefields at Cantigny and Chateau Thierry.

So, while those who gathered at the Memorial Days celebrations in 1918 honored the men of the Civil War, their minds also wandered to those missing from home who were now fighting for freedom on a global scale. The carnage on the battlefields of France had brought back the dignity and the solemn spirit of the day. Memorial Day was a day of prayer not only for those of the Civil War, but also for those fighting and dying in the “War to End All Wars.”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Weekly Times-Record (Valley City) June 6, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, May 30, 1918

Second Draft Registration

June 5, 2018

June 5, 1918, was the first anniversary of the Selective Service Draft Act. Almost six million men across the nation between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one had registered for the draft in that year. The draft was considered fairer than the Civil War draft in that it hit all aspects of society equally.

During the Civil War a conscript could hire a substitute to take his place and thus avoid military service. During World War I, most of the exemptions favoring the rich had been eliminated, and men of draft age from well-to-do families were actually drafted in proportionately greater numbers than the children of the poor, since men from poorer families were needed at home to support dependents or to work in essential war industries and were therefore exempted.

The 1917 Selective Service Act allowed for the conscription of six hundred and fifty-five thousand men to fill the ranks of the regular army and the National Guard, plus it provided for the drafting of an additional one million men to train for military service. North Dakota had been required to send almost eight thousand men, but since one third of that number had already volunteered, that left slightly over five thousand who were drafted and now on their way to Fort Lewis, Washington.

The second round of draft registration began on this date in 1918, with the intension of including all men who had attained the age of twenty-one during the previous year. Cass County alone registered almost three hundred men. It is interesting to see how the 1917 registry listed them: two hundred ninety-two American born men, eighteen friendly aliens, fifteen enemy aliens and one Negro.

The second draft registration brought one significant change regarding exemptions. Those engaged in farm and industrial occupations that supported the war had been allowed a Class III exemption. But that exemption was now gone, replaced by a policy called "Go to Work or Go to War" in which anyone whose number hadn't been drawn could still be drafted if they weren't engaged in productive labor. It was hoped this anti-slacker policy could make up for the workers lost to the draft, but with an unprecedented acreage of crops now in the ground, it was a major gamble.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Oakes Times, March 14, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, February 18, 1918

The Courier News, Fargo, North Dakota, June 6, 1918

On Messines Ridge

June 7, 2018

By June 7, 1917, the British Second Army was prepared to attack the Germans at Messines Ridge in northern France. The British had put a great deal of planning into the attack. For eighteen months, soldiers dug tunnels under the German positions. Some of the tunnels were

2,000 feet long. The Germans had been entrenched in their positions for almost two years. The British soldiers had to dig the tunnels as much as 100 feet below the surface. Once the tunnels were completed, the soldiers packed them with nearly 1 million pounds of explosives.

Early on the morning of June 7, a series of enormous explosions rocked the French countryside. A German observer said “nineteen enormous mushrooms rose up slowly and majestically out of the ground and then split into pieces with a mighty roar...sending a mass of earth and splinters high in the sky.”

On this date in 1918, the *Wahpeton Times* reported that a local boy had been at Messines Ridge. W.S. Bendixin returned to Hankinson to spend time with his mother. Bendixin had served for a year with Canadian forces in a Lewis machine gun platoon.

Prior to the explosion, Bendixin’s unit joined the famous Black Watch to attack the German position. Out of 100 men in his unit, Bendixin and his captain were the only survivors. Bendixin was wounded in three places. He pulled himself into a trench. Red Cross stretcher bearers ventured out to recover the wounded, but the Germans killed them. He lay in the trench until dark when stretcher bearers finally managed to reach him. He spent seven months in a hospital. He recovered the use of his arms and legs, but had a serious injury in his back, meaning he would never fight again.

However, he did witness the explosion. He reported that “after the hill was leveled, no one German could be found.” That was apparently an exaggeration, for while 10,000 men were killed instantly, another 7,000 were captured – stunned and disoriented from the blast. The battle forced the Germans to retreat, marking the beginning of a gradual but continuous loss of territory. It would still be another seventeen months before the war was finally over.

By Carole Butcher

Sources:

The Wahpeton Times. “Richland County Lad at Messines Ridge.” 28 March, 1917.

The History Channel. “The Battle of Messines Ridge.” <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/battle-of-messines-ridge> Accessed 21 February, 2017.

Artillery

June 15, 2018

By the middle of June in 1918, American troops, now numbering at over eight hundred thousand, were taking the offensive on their own and occupying sectors of the front in the Alsace area of France. Since entering the war, American casualties were slightly over eight thousand killed, wounded or missing. The unprecedented and unceasing use of artillery created most of the carnage.

Wesley Johnson of Sykeston, served with the American Expeditionary Force in the battle of the Bailleul Woods. Surviving his first major battle, he expressed his thoughts on fighting in the trenches, saying: “Gas and prospects of being attacked worried us practically none at all, but artillery was Hell on earth. At first when a shell came along we would poke up our heads to see

where it lighted; it was, in our opinion, a disgrace to duck. When one of our officers fell flat when (a shell) came over, it was great sport.”

But as the casualties grew, Johnson said the attitude changed, saying: “Toward the last we would crowd the bottom of the trench to the limit; not a piece of paper could have separated any of us from the ground. As to how we felt, I don’t believe there is anything I have yet experienced more terrible.”

Peter Nelson, a lad from Buchanan, North Dakota, wrote of the gas attacks in a letter home: “Dearest Mother, Father and all... Am making an effort at last to get a few words to you. I shouldn’t be doing this now, because everything is a blur before my eyes... It is a week ago since we all got into the glorious mix-up... The Huns bombarded us for four hours with all they had... and in the course of events I took a small quantity of gas. It sure is terrible stuff for it blinded me for four days and I don’t know when (my eyes) will be as they were before.”

Noting the death of his friend, Corporal Ernest Robertson, he reflected: “...but to look at the matter from a different standpoint, I consider myself lucky because I suffered very little from body burns and gas in my lungs ... poor Squeak has given his life to the cause for which we are fighting... killed instantly by a shell. Mother, I can imagine the sorrow it will cause.”

The North Dakota boys had behaved bravely as they ended their first major offensive. The timely introduction of American forces had helped stem the massive German advance.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Jamestown Weekly Alert, July 18, 1918

Foster County Independent August 8, 1918

In the World War, 1917-1918-1919, Cass County, North Dakota, 1919. Buckbee-Mears Co., St Paul, MN

North Dakota Marines

June 22, 2018

E. H. Tostevin, the Mandan soldier and newspaperman, traveled throughout France attempting to record the war as seen through the eyes of North Dakota soldiers. In a hospital somewhere in France he met Albert T. Mastrud, a freckled-faced, nineteen-year-old from Hatton who fought near the town of Bouresche, France on this date in 1918. He was one of sixteen North Dakota soldiers in his company from Barnes, Traill and Cass Counties who had enlisted in the Marines in May of 1917, shortly after the United States entered the war. As they went into battle, only two of them were over 20 years of age.

Assigned to take some machine gun positions, Mastrud stated that they didn’t have time to think about danger. They just charged across No-Man’s-Land, and straight at the machine guns. “Yes it takes guts to do it,” Mastrud recalled, “this going up to a machine gun on a frontal attack. You see men dropping all around you and you think you haven’t got a chance anyway, and then you think, ‘well they haven’t got me yet, maybe I’ll get by,’ and he surmised, “... about that time you get so boiling, ding-busted mad that you don’t care what happens...Oh! Well! You don’t get

much time for thinking.” On one occasion a high explosive shell cut the shoulder strap of his pack and tore it off, but he kept on going. The next day when he found it, he claimed that it contained an additional fifty pounds of shrapnel.

Mastrud recalled the good feed that night after taking the town of Bouresche. “We had been watching...all day, and every once in a while we could hear them butchering cattle or pigs. The house I hit that night had half a pig still roasting with the fire still going...That fresh meat, and hot, just as though we’d ordered it, sure tasted ding-busted good.”

On June 26th, when the battle ended, the official casualty count for the Marines was over three hundred dead, seven hundred wounded, with two missing. As for Albert Mastrud and the Marines from North Dakota, he said: “Just tell the folks for us that we intend to keep right on going until the Kaiser wishes he was enjoying the peace and quietude of Hell. ...none of us would miss this for all the money in the state of North Dakota.”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Foster County Independent, July 18, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, July 16, 1918

In the World War, 1917-1918-1919, Cass County, North Dakota, 1919. Buckbee-Mears Co, St Paul, MN

Tower City Marines

June 26, 2018

On April 26, 1917, only twenty days after the United States declared war on Germany, the newspaper headlines in the *Tower City Topics*, a Cass County newspaper, boasted, “Tower City Gives Ten Youths for Nation’s Defense.” Thirteen young men from Tower City traveled to Fargo and enlisted in the Marines, but only ten were accepted. They included Harold and Albert Beltman, Roy Black, John and Rudolph Boehm, Charles Carmichael, George Kelley, Leslie Sansburn, George Stine, and Ray Wells.

All but one of the members of the Tower City State Champion Basketball team of 1917 enlisted, however, it was a far different game they were playing now. Following basic training at Mare Island near San Francisco, they were sent for addition training at Quantico, Virginia. By January of 1918 they were in France with the 78th Company of the 6th Marines.

With the Tower City Marines were other North Dakota boys, including those from Buchanan, Mayville, Hatton, and Devils Lake – all who had joined the Marines at the first “Call to the Colors.” Accounts of their early battles appeared in articles written by E. H. Tostiven, a reporter traveling with the soldiers. Leslie Sansburn of Tower City, wounded in both legs on June 14th, told of the action during the advance on the Belleau Woods.

“When the command came,” he stated, “we went over the top... dashing into what seemed a veritable hail of steel and lead. Our casualties were heavy at first. It seemed certain death to advance. We had no adequate artillery support,” he continued, “and we were forced to advance

across an open wheat field. The Germans were firmly entrenched and had plenty of artillery support, while their machine gunners raked the open field.”

Although they took the position, the carnage was terrible. Sansburn said “There were 265 men in our company. Over 200 were either killed or badly wounded.”

Corporal Ernest Robertson of Buchanan was killed with the same shell that injured Sansburn. The 78th Company of Marines was virtually eliminated.

Of the ten young men from Tower City, who had enlisted together the year before, only one, Corporal Roy Black, had not been seriously wounded or gassed by the end of June of 1918. George Stine and Harold Beltman had made the supreme sacrifice. For Tower City, the news was devastating. The hearts of the community were bound closer together as two blue stars on its service flag were turned to gold.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, August 26, 1918

Jamestown Weekly Alert, December 5, 1918

Tower City Topics, July 11, 1918

Ibid, July 18, 1918

Ibid, July 25, 1918

Loyalty Week

July 3, 2018

A Loyalty Week event was held in North Dakota during the first week of July in 1918. It was sponsored by the North Dakota Council of Defense and the North Dakota Commission of Agriculture.

3,000 people descended on Bismarck for the opening festivities that included a Monster Aquatic Spectacle starring Miss Bertha Drago, “a pretty diving girl.” An evening illumination of the city was to be accompanied by a band concert and a street dance.

Another Loyalty Week event was the Dakota Tractor Show. It was billed as “the greatest exhibition of agricultural machinery in the history of the state.” Organizers anticipated that 35,000 farmers would attend, plus a considerable number of interested spectators. On this date the show began in the morning with a demonstration of twenty-one tractors. Some of the tractors, like International Harvester and Case, are still familiar to us today. Other less familiar machines included Fordson, Avery, and Happy Farmer. A serious plowing competition was scheduled for the afternoon on land described as “dry as a bone and as tough as leather, presenting every difficulty which will be encountered on the average farm.”

Loyalty Week continued with a Fourth of July extravaganza that was scheduled to start with patriotic speeches at the Capitol grounds featuring Corporal Smith of General Pershing’s staff. On furlough from the Army, Smith had served in France and would tell the audience about his experiences. It was noted that the grounds provided ample shade, a pleasant spot on a hot day.

Corporal Smith, who had given 500 speeches upon returning to the states, was billed as having a fine voice, which would allow everyone in the audience to hear him.

The speeches would be followed by a gigantic parade including bands, trade unions, war workers, farmers, fraternal organizations, Steele's Cavalry, decorated wagons, fine horses, and school children who would form the American flag and sing as they marched. Following the parade, Corporal Smith would introduce the movie *Pershing's Crusaders*. The day would be capped off with a band concert and street dance.

Saturday would feature a meeting of Councils of Defense from across the state, and the week's festivities would end with more band concerts and a street dance.

By Carole Butcher

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune. "Pershing Soldier to Make Principal Fourth of July Address at Capitol Park." Bismarck ND. 3 July 1918. Page 1.

Bismarck Tribune. "Old General Gloom Never Won a Battle – Cheer Up!" Bismarck ND. 26 June 1918. Page 2. "Keep His Knapsack Full." Page 8.

Bismarck Tribune. "3,000 People See Opener at Tractor Field." Bismarck ND. 3 July 1918. Page 1.

Motion Pictures

July 4, 2018

On this date in 1918, the political climate across the state was calming momentarily with the completion of North Dakota's primary election the week before. The Nonpartisan League made a significant showing in their hopes to control both houses of state government. Although the casualty lists from World War I coming in on a daily basis were putting a damper on the celebration of the Nation's Birthday, unlike the previous year, many communities were planning fireworks, while at the same time encouraging individuals to purchase War Stamps instead of buying personal fireworks, stating there were plenty of fireworks in France.

For the week of the July 4th, the Council of Defense was planning Loyalty Week events in Bismarck. They were expecting 20,000 farmers to attend. Events included a Dakota Tractor Day with a large agricultural exposition to introduce equipment and methods to enhance agricultural production. There was also a War Savings Day and Red Cross Day. More traditional for the holiday were the patriotic speeches, carnivals, bands and parades.

The Devils Lake Chautauqua opened on July 3rd with patriotic programs high on the list for July 3rd and 4th. Along with the Chautauqua lecture series, there were motion pictures with patriotic themes such as "Womanhood, the Glory of the Nation," and community singing of patriotic favorites. Almost all Fourth of July celebrations across the state included patriotic speeches, picnics and, of course, baseball games.

Motion pictures had become the rage, and movie theaters had become part of most communities in the state. Thomas Edison's motion picture company began in 1892, but it was perhaps one of

its last films that made its debut in 1918, bringing a small bit of solace to grieving North Dakota families. "The Unbeliever" was the story of a man who expresses his lack of belief in God, as well as his disdain for those of the lower classes. When he goes off to fight in World War I, side by side with men like his chauffeur, he finds God and comes to have respect for the common man. The film included battle scenes filmed with the cooperation of the Marine Base at Quantico, Virginia.

Among the Marine participants in these scenes were over two hundred North Dakota boys, including Ernest Robertson from Buchanan; George Stine and Harold Beltman from Tower City; and others, who had since been killed in action on the Battlefields of France. Though their names were now marked with gold stars, through the magic of Edison, they had come back home to North Dakota.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, June 26, 1918

The Oakes Times, July 4, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, July 22, 1918

Devils Lake World and Inter-Ocean, June 19, 1918

Council of Defense

July 10, 2018

In the Special Session of 1918, the North Dakota Legislature created and funded the North Dakota Council of Defense. The Council was comprised of the governor, the attorney general, and twelve members selected by the governor. The Council of Defense was granted broad powers to oversee coal resources and agricultural production. The governor was granted additional power to authorize other actions necessary for the conduct of the war.

With Lynn Frazier as governor, the Nonpartisan League was firmly in control of state government. In an incredibly bold move, the Council, comprised completely of loyal members of the Nonpartisan League, met on this date and enacted the North Dakota Council of Defense Corporation. This private corporation issued one million shares of stock at one dollar per share, with the stockholders limited to the present members of the Council of Defense.

The aim of the corporation was quite simple. Issuing a seven point declaration, its objective was to privatize and take over North Dakota's two thousand, two hundred grain elevators and warehouses and also several hundred creameries and cream stations. Under the control of the council, a board of trustees consisting of five to seven members chosen locally, would oversee the operations.

The former owners would be paid a rental fee based upon the actual assessed value of their business. In each community there would be a central point for weighing and grading the grain, which would be separated by type and grade and stored in the local elevators. The farmers would be paid for their grain plus any surplus profit, which would be prorated among them. There would be no dividends paid to the stock holders, but any proportionate expenses of the North

Dakota Council of Defense Corporation would be covered. Creameries were to be operated in the same fashion.

The reaction was loud and swift. The following day outraged farmer-owned and independent elevator operators descended upon the council offices. But before the general public had time to react, the Council denied they had ever approved the takeover. There may have been some discussion, they stated, but nothing showed up in their minutes, and they claimed there was never any serious consideration of endorsing the idea. Although the Nonpartisan League never attempted to reactivate the corporation, their initial idea, on a much-reduced scale, surfaced in the next legislative session with a proposal for the North Dakota State Mill and Elevator.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, July 11, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, July 11, 1918

Ibid, July 11, 1918

The Devils Lake World, July 17, 1918

Bismarck Tribune, February 3, 1919

Bismarck's Name

July 16, 2018

The trial of John H. Wishek, the former state senator and well-known banker and businessman from McIntosh County, began in Bismarck on July 9, 1918. Wishek, charged with sedition, faced several counts in the indictment including proliferation of pro-German propaganda and discouraging the sale of war bonds.

The trial's high profile sparked another rise in anti-German sentiment across the state. Almost daily, authorities in Bismarck received letters demanding that the name of Bismarck be changed. Communications came from practically every state in the union and even from countries allied with the United States. Educators, politicians, preachers, soldiers and students questioned the appropriateness of the name of a noted German leader being used for the capital of an American state.

Defenders stated that Prince Otto Von Bismarck was a truly great man who had in no way precipitated the war, and that the name was selected when the world was at peace. To change the name now would denote narrowness on the part of its citizens and would cost the city much in prestige. They also noted that it would cost a significant amount of money to reprint all the maps of the city, county, state and nation.

On this date in 1918, the name question had three Bismarck boys facing charges. Armed with brushes and yellow paint, it was their ambition to eliminate the name Bismarck from every location within the city. Under cover of darkness, they began with the Northern Pacific railway station and then proceeded to several locations, including the Bismarck Tribune, the Bismarck Shoe Hospital, and the Bismarck Commission. At each stop the offending moniker was obliterated. Once caught, city officials couldn't decide on charges, but eventually considered the adventure a boyish prank.

In an earlier editorial, the Bismarck Tribune itself had commented on anti-German sentiment. They noted that prior to the war, sauerkraut sold for \$50 a barrel, but soon after the United States entered the war, it was difficult to sell at \$14 a barrel, simply because it was a German specialty. The paper made the following proposal: “In the campaign to knock the German out of everything...may we not knock the high cost out of bread, meat, gasoline, clothes and shoes by giving them German names?” And they mused, “If we could do this, would it not be licking the Germans with German?”

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, April 29, 1918

Ibid, July 10, 1918

Ibid, July 15, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, July 19, 1918

Nurses to the Front

July 26, 2018

As the American Expeditionary Force became more heavily involved on the battlefields of France, casualty numbers were staggering as trench warfare became a war of attrition. Artillery and poisonous gases poured down indiscriminately, and machine guns raked thousands more in “No Man’s Land,” creating horrific wounds and sending thousands to evacuation hospitals near the front. It had become a bloodbath on an unprecedented scale.

Red Cross hospitals were overcome. On this date in 1918, the National Council of Defense was calling for twenty-five thousand young women to join the United States Student Nurse Reserve. Training took two years, and only trained nurses would be allowed to serve overseas. However, the presence of these student nurses stateside, would free more experienced nurses for duty in France. North Dakota’s quota was set at three hundred and seventy student nurses.

Jennie Mahoney of Langdon became a nurse when the United States entered the war, but she wasn’t called into service until March of 1918. Fifteen days after marching in the New York City Red Cross parade with President Wilson in mid-May, her company of one hundred nurses arrived in France. Riding in a “40 & 8” boxcar, they were sent to a base hospital near Bordeaux. Before she had time to unpack, a convoy of seven hundred wounded soldiers arrived. She worked through the night.

By mid-June, nurse Mahoney was stationed near the trenches at an evacuation hospital sixty miles north of Paris. Tents accommodated approximately nine hundred men, but the hospital was soon enlarged to care for over two thousand. Moving with the fighting, she was then transferred to a shell-torn hospital in battle-scarred Chateau Thierry.

Lest the enemy see a glimmer of light, the windows, doors and shell holes were covered with heavy blankets allowing them to work undetected by candlelight at night. Although terrified by the sound of exploding shells and bombs, the ground-shaking, and the return fire of the

American guns, nurse Mahoney helped care for over one thousand wounded men in a twelve hour shift. There she endured nightly bombing raids.

When the drive ended near the Belleau Woods, Jennie walked among the battlefields and trenches. Having witnessed weeks of mangled limbs and torn bodies, she marveled at the courage of the young soldiers, but her heart was heavy at the thought of the sacrifice. Among the killed and wounded were many North Dakota boys.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald, May 18, 1918

American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Dakota Biography Collection, Series 10339, State Archives, State Historical Society of North Dakota.

The Briquette, Scranton, ND, July 25, 1918

Help Wanted

August 1, 2018

The war had brought about some dramatic labor shifts. Immediately a call went out for 25,000 student nurses in July of 1918, it was followed by a request for graduate nurses who were not already associated with the Red Cross. Also to this point, nurses who had male relatives in the army had been forbidden to go overseas, but due to the critical shortage, those restrictions were repealed. North Dakota was asked to furnish eighty nurses to be sent to the front. It was considered the patriotic duty of every qualified woman to respond at once.

In other areas, there was an over-supply of young women working in restaurants, cafeterias and doing office work. It was noted, however, that girls could make big money doing housework. Mrs. Minnie Bowe, in charge of the United States Employment Offices in Fargo, stated that wages for housework were running at \$7.00 to \$10.00 per week, plus room and board, but because most of those jobs were only available on the farms, few girls could be persuaded to apply. Girls applying for office work were advised to take the civil service exam to obtain government jobs.

With crops beginning to ripen, harvest hands were in short supply, but there was also a need for help in other areas across the country. The US Employment Service announced that each state was to recruit a quota of unskilled laborers to work in the war industries and the mines. North Dakota was called upon to furnish almost one thousand men for war related work over the next two months. This represented approximately 3% of the available manpower not in military service. These individuals could not be conscripted, but under the "Go to work or go to war" policy, many were convinced to join the workforce.

On the battlefields of France, specialized units of men were organized to strike quickly and efficiently. Known as Shock Troops, they were used effectively for short-range missions. On this date in 1918, subscribers to the *Fargo Forum* were surprised by the use of Shock Troops in Cass County! It involved nine members of the Forum staff traveling to nearby farms after each daily publication was completed. At the Wilmay-Scott dairy farm two miles south of the city, they shocked thirty-five acres of barley. The following day they invaded the Smith farm two miles to

the north and shocked one hundred and fourteen acres of wheat. In the days before combines, shocking was the act of standing sheaves of cut grain stalks on end to keep them dry before threshing. Due to the lack of available farm labor, the Forum staff vowed to continue this “shocking” behavior until the snow flew.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Fargo Form, August 2, 1918

Ibid; August 5, 1918

American Soul

August 10, 2018

When Dakota Territory was settled, the United States encouraged the arrival of European immigrants. At a federal court hearing this week in 1918, Judge Charles Amidon, noted this in the sentencing of the Rev. John Fontana, pastor of the German Evangelical Lutheran church of New Salem, who was convicted for violating the Espionage Act of 1917. The judge said, “We urged you to come, we welcomed you, we gave you opportunity, we gave you land, we conferred on you the diadem of American citizenship, and then we went away and left you. We have paid almost no attention to what you were doing.”

But with the American Expeditionary Forces taking on increased front line casualties, Judge Amidon went on to note that the World War had thrown up a powerful searchlight that found “Little Germanies,” “Little Austrias,” “Little Italys,” “Little Norways” and “Little Russias.” He argued that these immigrants had cherished the American soil, but they had thrown a circle around themselves, and instead of keeping their oath of allegiance to support the United States Constitution, they continued to cherish and perpetuate everything foreign.

Rev. Fontana was sentenced to three years at the federal prison at Leavenworth, his offenses not very concrete – not buying war bonds, defending the attack on the *Lusitania*. Judge Amidon admonished him, stating, “Your body has been in America, but your life has been in Germany.

You have influenced others under your ministry to do the same thing. A good many Germans have been before me, during the last month. They have lived in this country like yourself, 10, 20, 30, 40 years....but as I looked at them...(it) was written all over every one of them ‘Made in Germany’.” “You promised you would bear true faith to the United States,” he continued, “That meant that you would grow a new soul as soon as you could and put aside your German soul. It means that you will speak the American language, sing American songs, study American history and open your eyes through every avenue to influence American life. It means you will begin first of all to learn English, the language of your country, so there will be windows and doors through which American ideals may enter.”

Judge Amidon felt a need to suppress the existence of these little “islands of foreignness,” dealing with them in a firm hand. The business of making foreignness perpetual had to cease. If necessary, he declared they would cancel every certificate of naturalization in the United States. There was to be no more cherishing of foreign ideals. He reflected a common attitude of the times – that the day had arrived when every immigrant needed to grow an American soul.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Washburn Leader, August 16, 1918

New Draft

August 15, 2018

The American Expeditionary Forces were advancing, with the British and French forces, along the front in France. The casualties were heavy. As of August 1, 1918, over 1.3 million American soldiers were in France.

The War Department announced plans to send a quarter of a million men per month to France. They were determined to expand the presence of American forces in hopes of shortening the war. This strategy would put almost 3.6 million men at the front by June of 1919, and it would call for a significant increase in the draft. Congress was posed to expand the draft age to include all males between the ages of 18 and 45. The call was out for North Dakota to prepare to enroll 75,000 men in August and September.

In addition, the Provost Marshall called for white draft registrants with grammar school education to be sent for special training to various colleges. The North Dakota School of Mines in Grand Forks was to receive approximately two hundred of these individuals on September 1. At the same time as this announcement was made, 250 soldiers of the First Training Detachment were preparing to depart from the North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo to military bases in the South for further training. A second detachment was already in route to begin training at the Agricultural College later that week.

The drafting of those who had turned twenty-one since the initial draft in June of 1917 was set for the end of August, but August in North Dakota, meant harvest time. When the citizens of Fargo initiated "Get the Kaiser's Goat" promotion in March to sell War Thrift Stamps, the concept swept the nation. The launching of "Shock Troops" to aid in the harvest received a similar reception across the state as all manner of businesses in the larger cities became involved in the harvest, which allowed boxcar loads of farm laborers to be sent to rural areas.

The so-called "Shock Troops" were paid fair wages for their efforts, but most of proceeds were given to the Red Cross. Their work was so valued in Fargo that a parade and picnic was scheduled for the end of the harvest season. A bountiful harvest would not only help ensure a victory in the war, but with the world's food supply critically low, it was desperately needed to ward off mass starvation in war-torn Europe.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Grand Forks Herald, August 19, 1918

Fargo Forum, August 15, 1918

Dickinson Press, August 10, 1918

Newspaper Printing

August 28, 2018

Weekly or daily, depending upon the local publisher, North Dakotans counted on newspapers to publish the minutes of county and city meetings, land proofs, and other official documents. So, as Western lands were settled, publishers were soon to follow, making much of their income by publishing homestead proofs.

By 1918, North Dakota had approximately 350 newspapers. When the United States entered the War in 1917, the papers became an essential tool for coordinating the war effort. Meeting notices, war bond sales, food restrictions, and draft notices were all carried in local newspapers. Pro-German sympathizers were exposed. Red Cross and Y.M.C.A efforts were chronicled. The smash-up of the North Dakota Smashing Second Regiment was proclaimed, and Herbert Hoover's meatless and wheatless days were announced.

As the North Dakota soldiers first went into battle in February of 1918, the families back home counted on the newspapers to provide information on their loved ones. At first, the news from the front was widely censored. Letters were carefully scrutinized to eliminate the names of units. Locations were invariably noted as "Somewhere in France." But as the Associated Press began sending back news from the front line trenches, the progress of the war became more detailed. By May, newspapers were printing letters that detailed recent battles and locations. Reporters such as E. H. Tostevin, formerly with the *Mandan Pioneer*, recounted the horrors of trench warfare. Vibrant descriptions of battlefields and of North Dakota boys "going over the top" were now being published in local newspapers. And as the war progressed, weekly casualty reports brought the face of war to homes across the state.

With so much news and information to report, newspapers expanded, both in the number of pages and in the number of subscribers. The demand for newsprint was staggering. One this date in 1918, the War Industries Board announced that all weekly newspapers had to reduce their circulation by 15%. Although it adversely affected smaller newspapers, most publishers recognized it as a chance to rid themselves of delinquent subscribers, reduce the number of complimentary copies, and even increase their rates. The order was to be effective on September 15. For many publishers it was a significant windfall, and for many North Dakota families already strapped with increased prices, news of their loved ones would have to come from other sources.

By Jim Davis

Source:

The Courier Democrat, (Langdon, North Dakota) August 29, 1918

Jewish Homeland

September 5, 2018

Among the North Dakota soldiers fighting somewhere in France, were a number of young men of Jewish faith. Sam Rigler, from Taylor, North Dakota, trusted in his faith to survive life in the trenches. He was quoted in the newspaper as saying, "There I was huddled up against the side of a trench... I silently offered prayers to God and asked for divine guidance and protection."

In a letter to his brother, he stated: “The word was passed around that we were going over the top at 5 AM. Just before daybreak we climbed over, packs thrown away, but rifles loaded and bayonets fixed... The battle was raging, shells cracking, hissing and exploding but a few feet away... we crept along close to the ground. Dawn was setting in and the explosion of the shells lighted up the sky. There we were, out there in No Man’s Land and only the will of God could save us.”

He noted that food was difficult to obtain at the front, and after having meals of raw potatoes, a cooked dinner was a precious commodity. On one occasion, a German shell exploded a short distance away, knocking the food and coffee from his hands. He flattened out close to the ground while the dirt and rock showered down on him, but he never lost sight of his bread, bacon and potatoes. When the barrage lifted, the food was hurriedly gathered in his empty coffee cup and quickly devoured in a nearby trench.

Sam Rigler entered the trenches on the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, and on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, he was lying in the hospital, having been slightly gassed. Meanwhile, back in North Dakota, the service flag of the Fargo Synagogue displayed thirty stars representing Jewish soldiers from the community serving at the front. The Reverend J. Klitzner prayed for those Jewish boys in the trenches who were unable to perform their New Year’s obligations.

He announced that they were now fighting for a greater ideal, the restoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers, for it was on this date in 1918 that local newspapers revealed that Great Brittan, France and Italy had declared that Palestine, once liberated, would be used to create a Jewish homeland. Chapters of the Zionist Organization of America were formed in Grand Forks, Fargo and other cities to assist with the Palestine movement.

Harry Lashkowitz of Fargo believed that it was the ardent desire for every Jew to fight to the utmost and make this a safe world for them to live in.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Taylor Recorder, September 25, 1918

Fargo Forum, August 5, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, September 5, 1918

Bismarck Tribune, September 10, 1918

Albert Grass

September 18, 2018

John Grass, or Charging Bear, was a beloved leader of the Teton Sioux and an ardent supporter of the war effort. July of 1917, although weakened by a prolonged illness, the elderly chief accepted the vice-chairmanship of the Red Cross for Sioux County. He stated that as a young man he went to war many times, but his thoughts were not of death but of honor. Although it caused him great grief to see his children going into battle, there was joy in his heart to know they were not cowards.

His adopted son, Major A. B. Welch, and his grandson, Albert Grass, had both joined Company I of the Second Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard. He was glad to see his son and grandson go to war, and that their patriotic influences were stronger than their fear of death. He was sure they would not bring disgrace upon the family. He saw death in battle as an honorable thing, and he had influenced almost two hundred young men from Standing Rock to join the war effort.

However, John Grass, a veteran of many battles, would not live to see the war come to an end, his death occurring on May 10, 1918. And on this date that same year, the casualty list brought the news to Standing Rock that Albert Grass had been killed in action on the battlefields of France. He was the first member of the Standing Rock Reservation to give his life. The news arrived during the Sioux County Indian Fair where thousands of Standing Rock residents had gathered for the festival. The news spread rapidly. Soon the wail of the women, mourning for a warrior lost in battle, was heard throughout the camp. Three thousand men and women at the encampment kept a memorial dance going throughout the night.

Initially, the report had stated that Albert Grass, or Two Bears, was a victim of poisonous gas, however news soon arrived that showed actions over and above the call of duty. According to General Order No. 1 issued by the headquarters of the 1st Division, Albert Grass attacked a machine gun nest, killing or wounding twenty-four German soldiers before receiving the fatal bullet that took his life. Only two months after the death of his grandfather, he too entered the Spirit World. A recipient of the Silver Star, he would have made his grandfather proud of the honor he brought to his name.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, August 13, 1917

Sioux County Pioneer, May 16, 1918

Ibid.; September 19, 1918

Letters from France

September 19, 2018

On this date in 1918, many North Dakota soldiers were serving their country in the War, and when they wrote home, it was common for the recipient to give the letter to the local newspaper, which would then print it, so everyone would know what was going on.

For many soldiers their enlistment brought their first trip out of the state. The *Hope Pioneer* reported on Claude Baker of Luverne and his trip to Camp Mills, New York. The recruits were pleased to find that their train was equipped with Pullman sleeping cars, which made for an enjoyable journey. The train went through Chicago, but it was midnight and there wasn't much to see. A long stop in Cleveland gave Baker and his comrades time to swim in Lake Erie. The train then traveled across New York State to Hoboken where the recruits transferred to a steamboat. Baker saw the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge.

Ray L. Catlin of Berg enlisted on July 31, 1917. He was wounded, and at the time of writing his letter he was recovering in a French hospital. He declared that France was "as pretty a country as

you want to lay your eyes on.” But what struck him most was how glad the French were to see Americans. He said that every old lady “treats you like she was your mother.” He added that the nurses were like sisters to the soldiers. Catlin said they would do anything to help the wounded. He urged his family not to worry about him. His wound was in his left hand. As he was right-handed, he said it would not be much of a bother.

As much as the soldiers reassure family and friends, the news was not always good. As we reported in yesterday’s Datebook, it was the *Sioux County Pioneer* that reported on the death of Albert Grass of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. And there was also the news on this date that Joseph Lockwood, who had enlisted at Wahpeton, was missing in action and feared captured.

Newspapers were a valuable lifeline for the folks at home as they waited anxiously for stories affecting their family, friends, and neighbors.

By Carole Butcher

Sources:

Hope Pioneer. “Letters from France.” *Hope ND*. 19 September 1918. Page 2.

Sioux County Pioneer. “Albert Grass Lost in Action.” *Fort Yates ND*. 19 September 1918 Page 1.

Fourth Liberty Loan

September 26, 2018

From the American perspective in September of 1918, the allies in France needed to take the offensive instead of continuing the battle of attrition associated with trench warfare. American leaders were willing to commit what was necessary to get the job done quickly. Initially it would result in more casualties, but it promised to bring an earlier end to the war.

On Pershing’s birthday, September 13, the American Expeditionary Forces launched a campaign commanded by American officers. With the number of American troops escalating dramatically, so did the cost of the war. To fund it, the Fourth Liberty Loan began on September 28.

Known as the Fighting Loan, it had a staggering price tag. The quota for North Dakota was set at nineteen million dollars. Bells, sirens, parades and patriotic speeches heralded the beginning of the bond drive, allowing only a few days to a week to meet the quota. Despite the fact that North Dakotans had been digging deep into their pockets for almost a year, most locations in the state went “over the top” on their share. Money from the harvest had fueled the local economy, and an early end of the war could save the life of a loved one fighting in France.

Thanks to the assistance of urban volunteers known as “shock troops” and also the “work or fight” order putting idle men to work in the grain fields, the harvest was nearing completion. But farmers had been encouraged to plant every available acre, and, due to good yields, the volume of grain leaving the state became too massive for the shippers to handle.

The price of grain was fixed by the government, so there was no incentive for the farmers to store it. With the grain being sent to market as quickly as it could be harvested, seaboard and

Eastern grain terminals quickly filled to capacity. Railcars were also in short supply, but, on the bright side, most restrictions on wheat flour had been rescinded.

North Dakota's ranching industry also contributed to the war effort, but most livestock was shipped to the East for processing. On this date in 1918, the Equity Cooperative Packing Company announced that it was nearing the completion of its new meat processing plant in an open field near Fargo. A shortage of labor delayed the installation of equipment and slowed the construction of twenty-four homes for plant's workforce, but a mid-winter opening was still planned. This processing plant in West Fargo would go on to operate for over seventy years – spawned by the needs of the War to End All Wars.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Ward County Independent, September 3, 1918

Grand Forks Herald, September 24, 1918

Fargo Forum, September 28, 1918

Ibid; September 26, 1918

United War Fund

October 5, 2018

Three days after the drive for the Fourth Liberty Loan began on September 28, 1918, the citizens of North Dakota had subscribed to \$12 million of the state's \$19 million quota. But liberty loans involved redeemable bonds. Although the sale of bonds tied up personal finances, the money would eventually be returned with interest, and the end of the war appeared to be in sight.

The Allies were driving the Germans back to, and beyond, the Hindenburg Line, but it came at a cost. Casualty lists were swelling, but this reality of war also spurred the desire for North Dakotans to donate. When the first combat death of a North Dakota boy was announced in February, the number of Red Cross members grew substantially. As a result, over \$600,000 worth of goods was produced by North Dakota units of the Red Cross over the next seven months.

The escalating tempo of the war was rapidly draining the funds of the many organizations supporting the troops. With the Fourth Liberty Loan drive nearing completion, organizations such as the Red Cross, were planning to begin campaigns of their own.

They desperately needed to solicit donations to fund their activities on the battlefields of France and in the encampments stateside. The people of North Dakota, like their fellow Americans, had been asked to dig deeply, including a recent campaign asking farmers to donate the yield from a number of acres to the Red Cross. The needs of all of the organizations were increasing dramatically, while the ability of people to support every cause was decreasing.

On September 5, President Woodrow Wilson suggested that instead of mounting separate campaigns, the major organizations combine into a United War Work Campaign. Seven organizations which together would make this united appeal were the YMCA, the YWCA, the

National Catholic War Council, the Jewish Welfare Board, the War Camp Community Service, the American Library Association and the Salvation Army.

Over one hundred and seventy million dollars were needed, and North Dakotans were being asked for \$675,000, or one dollar for every man, woman and child in the state. The new slogan was, "It can be done, it must be done, it will be done." Since time was needed to set up the combined drive, ironically, the kick-off date was set for November 11, which would turn out to be the date of the armistice.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Washburn Leader, September 13, 1918

The Bismarck Tribune, September 30, 1918

Spanish Flu

October 10, 2018

On September 29, 1917, throngs of people had stood amid garlands of red, white and blue bunting, waving flags and banners as they crowded on the railroad platforms to send off Company B of the First Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard.

Patriotic speeches and music filled the air. For the families it had been a long, prayerful year. At first the war news was hopeful and only a spattering of local names were among the casualty lists, but as the American Expeditionary Force took on a more aggressive role, the ranks of the dead and wounded began to swell.

On October 6, 1918, slightly over a year from the anniversary of their departure, the citizens of Fargo and the surrounding towns were to gather in the Fargo Auditorium. A memorial had been arranged to pay tribute to the sacrifices of Company B and the other area men who had paid the supreme sacrifice. It was also a prayer service for those who were yet to meet their fate.

With the war still raging it would be a somber affair, with twenty-eight names from Cass County on the list, including eleven names from Company B dead or missing. A thousand invitations were sent out to family members from Company B, but all area people were requested to join in the event. It was considered a patriotic duty, as well as a moral obligation to attend.

As Fargo prepared to honor the one-year anniversary of the regiment's departure, the specter of death, which had hovered over the battlefields of France, had now found its way to the shores of America – in the form of the Spanish flu epidemic. Carried home from Europe by returning soldiers, it had risen to such large proportions in the eastern United States that stamping it out had become an official part of the war effort. But death rode the rails westward, and by this date in 1918, over two hundred cases of Spanish Flu had been reported in Fargo.

Spreading quickly across the state, flu deaths were also reported in New Rockford and Jamestown, and several Northern Pacific brakemen who had contracted the disease in the East had died in western North Dakota.

The Company B memorial and all public events were cancelled. As difficult as it had been for families to cope with loved ones dying on the distant battlefields of France, death had now come to their own doorstep.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, October 7, 1918

Fargo Forum and Daily Republican, September 26, 1918

Ibid; September 26, 1918

Ibid; September 27, 1918

Ibid; October 4, 1918

The Food Pledge October 11, 2018

On this date in 1917, Europe was at war. America had not yet joined the fight, but there was another war to be waged: the war against hunger. Europe was woefully short of food. Herbert Hoover, the Food Administrator, announced that the United States could do a great deal to help the European allies, suggesting that Americans eat less of the foods that could be shipped to Europe, and more of the perishable foods that could not.

The Food Administrator position was established by The Lever Act, which was signed into law the previous August. Critics of the law were concerned that the Food Administrator was given too much power to make sweeping decisions on his own. But President Wilson was able to push the law through.

Hoover's job was to oversee the use of agricultural products. He had the authority to fix food prices, license distributors, coordinate purchases, oversee exports, act against hoarding and profiteering, and incentivize farmers to grow more crops.

In support of the effort to help the allies, the *Hope Pioneer* urged North Dakotans to enlist in the Food Conservation Movement. Europe needed bread and butter as well as beef, pork, sugar, and dairy products. American housewives were called upon to do their part to make the world safe for democracy.

To that end, the Food Pledge Campaign was scheduled to open on October 21st and run for one week. All housewives were asked to sign the pledge. The campaign required no dues or contributions. All that was needed was a signature. The signer pledged to carry out the directions and advice of the Food Administrator. The signature on the pledge card was "a promise to the Federal Government" that North Dakotans were in support of the United States and our allies. Across the country, states took steps to comply with the Food Conservation Movement.

The article in the *Hope Pioneer* argued that North Dakota bore a notable responsibility to make the program a success, since except for sugar, every food item on the list was produced in the state. The article said North Dakota's contribution to the war effort could be "extra large" if each of the state's 138,000 families would carefully conserve.

By Carole Butcher

Sources:

Hope Pioneer. "Enlist in the Food Conservation Movement." 11 October 1917. *Hope, ND* Pg 1

The Liberal Democrat. "As to County Agents." 23 August 1917. *Liberal KS.* Page 8.

The Daily Times. "Business Men Mobilize Again." 9 October 1917. *Barre VT.* Page 1.

Cases and Cures

October 19, 2018

As the Meuse-Argonne offensive began, the letters from the North Dakota soldiers in France were now only lightly censored. Life on the battlefield was being graphically described to family and friends back home. While this helped sell the Fourth Liberty Loan, it also triggered a quick reaction to any anti-war sentiment.

When the District Court in Fargo convened for the October session, it was seeking to dispose of more than one hundred criminal cases, most directly related to the Espionage Act. Patriotism was foremost. A young Norwegian of Walsh County, facing the draft, claimed he was an alien of a neutral country and withdrew his Declaration of Intention to become a citizen. Later he approached the draft board and stated that he regretted that decision.

His case was referred to Adjutant General G. A. Fraser of the North Dakota National Guard. In a warning to others, Fraser stated that not only could the young man not be reinstated into the draft, he could also never become a citizen. He stated that citizenship was not an old coat that could be put on and taken off at whim. The young man should have been willing to assume the full responsibility of citizenship.

While the letters from the battlefields were filled with the horrors of war, the letters also brought sad news from military bases in England and the United States, far from the frontlines. Due to the close living conditions, the spread of Spanish flu was rampant. A young Wilton woman, Emily Anderson, who had lost a brother six months earlier, was called to an Army Camp near Seattle to escort the remains of her brother Arthur, a flu victim. Upon arrival she discovered that her brother Herbert had also succumbed to the dreaded disease.

The epidemic had become widespread in North Dakota, and various cures were being touted, including Gold Medal Haarlam Oil and Vick's VapoRub. Mess Sergeant Albert Johnson wrote to his sister in Fargo, claiming that hot lemonade in the evening and onions at every meal had kept his troops healthy.

When the letter was printed in the Forum, local grocers were besieged with demands for onions and lemons. Soon most citizens of Fargo were sipping lemonade and munching raw onion. Even "dainty little ladies" roamed about Fargo with confidence and, incidentally, they had an air about them that would ward off almost anything.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Bismarck Tribune, October 17, 1918

Ibid; October 4, 1918

Fargo Forum, October 22, 1918

Bone Dry Law

October 23, 2018

The Germans were steadily being forced back towards their homeland, giving up much of the territory they had gained since 1914. As the Allies advanced, the communities they recaptured were impoverished, destroyed by the retreating forces.

Although the seven major relief organizations in the United States, such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, had agreed to a united campaign scheduled to begin on November 11, it became apparent that thousands of Jewish people, especially those in Poland and Lithuania, were dying from starvation and in desperate need of help. President Wilson declared that this date, October 23 was Jewish Relief Day, and Governor Lynn Frazier issued a Proclamation for North Dakota.

But just as disease and famine was the scourge of the war zone in Europe, the Spanish Flu had spread rapidly across North Dakota sparing few. The liberal use of alcohol was touted to help cure the dreaded disease, but it was not available in North Dakota. With Prohibition in North Dakota's constitution, all but medicinal alcohol had been banned since statehood. And at the end of the 1917 Legislative Session, House Bill 39, termed the bone dry law, made importing alcohol illegal, making it unavailable even to pharmacies.

But on this date in 1918, Supreme Court Justice James Robinson issued a letter stating that after a great deal of research, he believed House Bill 39 was a bogus statute. The Senate had initially amended the bill to allow each household to import four quarts of whiskey, five gallons of wine, or seventy-two quarts of beer for personal use, but in the House, that amendment was dropped and new restrictions, including the ban on importation, were added. Problem is, the revised bill never returned to the Senate for a vote, hence the decision by Judge Robinson.

Although attorney general William Langer had made it his mission to eliminate all alcohol in the state, the flu crisis brought a change of heart. He had been one of the first in Bismarck to get the flu, and now his new bride was also taken ill. So, he quickly contacted the railroad and other delivery companies, announcing that prescription alcohol could be delivered after all.

While Robinson's decision was being hotly debated, alcohol began flowing into the pharmacies. With House Bill 39 deemed ineffective, many a healthy North Dakotan soon discovered symptoms that required an immediate application of the newly available anti-flu medicine.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, October 18, 1918

Soliloquy to No Man's Land

November 1, 2018

"No Man's Land," the area between the trenches, was a concentrated killing field that had to be crossed if any advance was going to take place. Sentries were often placed in this area at night to

warn against enemy activity. One of these was Russell Diesem, from LaMoure, who occupied a sentry post north of Verdun.

On this date in 1918, in a letter home, he composed a Soliloquy to No Man's Land, revealing the details of his lonely vigil and how awe struck he was with mankind's ability to destroy:

“The night of the first day, I was on duty in the lonesome outpost out in No Man's Land—that interesting region so fraught with mystery, spectral death and tense possibilities. In the wee morning hours our artillery opened up a barrage, bringing an indescribable electric thrill as it heralded to both us and the enemy another grim excursion ‘over the top.’ Our barrage was wonderful. The horizon was lit with lurid flares of thrilling portent playing about the sky like continuous sheet lightning. The roar of the guns shook the earth, coming like successive—yes, overlapping—peals of thunder, or the unceasing roll of storm-driven surf. The air was vibrant with all the excitement of the great conflagration ... and all heightened by the grim soul-stirring thought that this was MAN-MADE. ... At such times the petty things of life become as nothing and human life itself becomes but an atom of accomplishment of that unceasing purpose which through the ages run.

To come back to earth from this rhetorical aero-planing, the Germans threw back a return barrage and I enjoyed the interesting novelty of being under real shell fire. Several shells fell within a few feet of my outpost, throwing dirt, stones and brimstone all over me. The Boches sent over some gas too... I had just received Leila's fine letter and while waiting for the fateful zero hour for going over, I eagerly re-read (it) ... not knowing for certain whether I should ever have an opportunity to do so again.”

Russell Diesem would survive to write more letters and would eventually return home to his job as editor of the LaMoure Chronicle. After experiencing heavy shelling and machine gun fire, he wondered how he survived. While men fell within a few feet all around him, he stated that he seemed to be like the hole in the doughnut and escaped unscathed.

By Jim Davis

Source:

LaMoure Chronicle, January 2, 1919

Apocalypse

November 9, 2018

By the end of October in 1918, the people of North Dakota held an apocalyptic view of unfolding events. The whirlwind pace of an incredibly violent year had eclipsed anything ever witnessed before. Editor F.W Wardwell of the Pioneer Express at Pembina had stated that it took blood to make people understand what war means, and, in his words, the war demon had spread his red cape across the state as loved ones were dying on the battlefields of France.

By mid-October the casualty lists were swollen with the names of local heroes, when just as suddenly, in the cities and towns across the state, pestilence, in the form of the Spanish flu was taking its toll, adding to the misery. Death was on most doorsteps.

Famine was the final member of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as mentioned in a book by that name, which was becoming popular at the time. While not manifest in the state, rationing and food shortages, had become a part of everyday life. To add to the turmoil, in many parts of the state, vigilante law dealt with slackers and seditionists, as an intolerance of German ethnicity greatly strained communities.

Meanwhile, as huge forest fires in northern Minnesota killed hundreds of people and destroyed complete towns, clouds of smoke rolled through the state, casting an eerie gloom.

But if it is always the darkest before the dawn, news from the battlefield and the home front was beginning to indicate that the end of the war was in sight. After battlefield deaths had risen with the latest push, they now declined with the Germans driven back and Austria surrendering unconditionally.

On the home front, flu death likewise had peaked and communities were beginning to allow social gathering. Meanwhile, a bountiful harvest had lessened the food shortages, but there was much work to be done, as it would be months before conditions in Europe would allow the return of most troops.

On this date in 1918, the war-weary population of North Dakota was preparing to launch the United War Work Campaign on November 11. The major welfare organizations had combined their fund drives into one major effort to promote the welfare of the soldiers in France and in training camps across the nation. Nationally, two hundred and fifty million dollars was the goal, with North Dakota's share being slightly over \$1,000,000. Peace was in sight but the war effort carried on.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

Devils Lake World and Inter-Ocean, November 13, 1918

The Bismarck Tribune, October 14, 1918

The Oakes Times, October 24, 1918

The Pioneer Express, April 13, 1917

The War Is Over

November 12, 2018

Slightly over one year after the First and Second Regiments of the North Dakota National Guard departed from the State, the war was over. An announcement that the armistice was to be signed was made by the State Department at 2:45 o'clock in morning of November 11, 1918, and a few minutes later it was flashed throughout the continent by the Associated Press. The Armistice was signed at six o'clock Washington time. News that peace was imminent was received in Bismarck by the *Bismarck Tribune* in the early morning hours.

Upon confirmation, the Hughes Electric Company power station was advised and a minute later its big siren was blaring the news to the countryside. Church bells joined in and crowds began to congregate.

Governor Lynn Frazer issued a proclamation, declaring that November 11th was a holiday to be known as Victory Day. He stated, “The glad news has come across the ocean that the slaughter of mankind and the untold suffering of humans is to cease and that God has permitted the dove of victory to alight on our standards and on those of our Allies.”

In a more dramatic fashion, a motorcycle with a side car, exhibiting an image of the Kaiser perched on a stick, made a number of trips up and down the main street of Bottineau to the center of town where it was blown to pieces with a shotgun.

The fighting was over and it was now to become a time of healing and a time of social change. As North Dakotans looked forward to the return of the thousands of young men who had gone off to war, hundreds of young women, trained as nurses, were still departing for the hospitals and nursing homes that had been established to care for the wounded, both in Europe and in America. Many other young women had left the farms to work in the jobs normally staffed by men.

The war had changed a generation of men and women who had witnessed the reality of war and had attained a personal freedom and sense of accomplishment away from the drudgery of farm life. It would also take time to heal communities where German immigrants were persecuted, and war time sentiments would have a lasting effect for years.

And more importantly, families began to heal from the loss of loved ones, as one hundred years ago, North Dakotans honored almost fourteen hundred of their own that perished in the “War to End All Wars.” Their’s was a sacrifice that should not to be forgotten.

By Jim Davis

Sources:

The Bismarck Tribune, November 12, 1918

The Bottineau Courant, November 14, 1918

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