

# World War One

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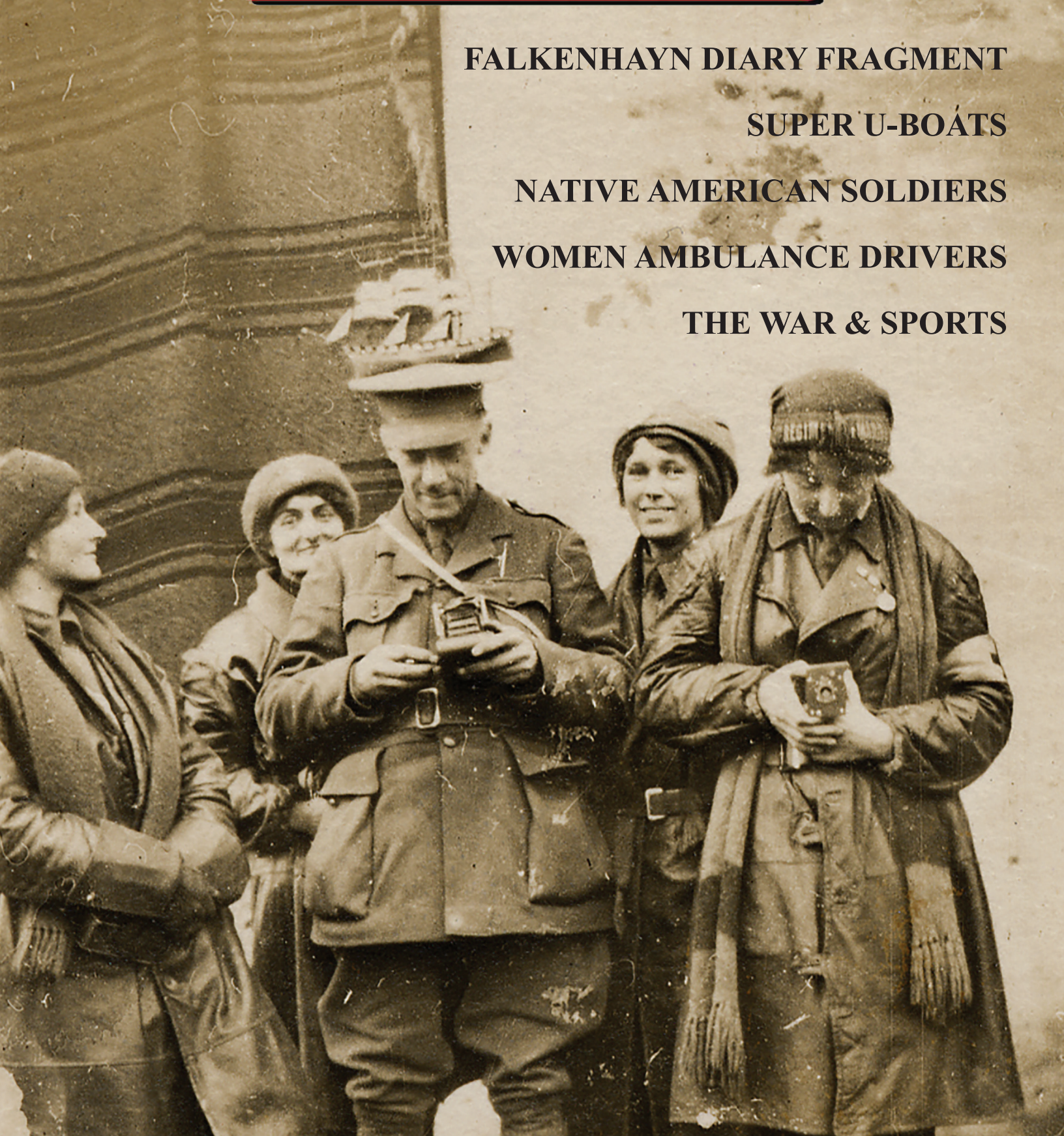
FALKENHAYN DIARY FRAGMENT

SUPER U-BOATS

NATIVE AMERICAN SOLDIERS

WOMEN AMBULANCE DRIVERS

THE WAR & SPORTS





## Letter from the editor:

Issue #17 continues the tradition of taking a broad look at World War One and its times. The articles range from a recently discovered Erich von Falkenhayn memoir fragment to the impact of the war on American sports. Our new section, Women in the Great War, has a contribution about British and American ambulance drivers in Flanders. This article is the first of a two-part series.

I'd especially like to acknowledge James Hamilton for the back cover. He discovered the "Ripley's Believe It or Not" cartoon in researching for his website, The Free Fall Research Page ([www.greenharbor.com](http://www.greenharbor.com)). The site tracks long-fall survival incidents. His expertise recently landed him a spot on The History Channel program, The UnXplained (hosted by William Shatner) in a 2022 episode entitled, "Surviving the Impossible." James has previously written about American ambulance drivers, World War One Illustrated, Fall 2019, #11. 34-39.

So, after you've looked at the back cover, enjoy the rest of the magazine.

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Front Cover: Smiling faces of (left to right) Mairi Chisholm, Elsie Knocker, Helen Gleason, Dorothe Feilding and Dr Henry Jellett. He has a miniature sailing ship balanced on his cap for some reason. Flanders, Furnes region, first half of 1915. (source: Patrick Vanleene, see page 30)

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## Table of Contents

### 4

#### **The Chaos of Bureaucratic Politics: General Erich Von Falkenhayn and the July Crisis of 1914**

*Holger H. Herwig*

### 12

#### **Fighting Back: U.S. Naval Defense Forces and the German Threat “Over Here” in 1918**

*Paul Hodos*

### 19

#### **My Kin in the Great War: My Faher E. Miles Atkinson, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S.**

*Peter Atkinson*

### 23

#### **Resurrecting the Warrior: American Indian WW1 Veterans and Spirituality**

*Patricia Cecil*

### 30

#### **Women in the Frontlines Dr. Hector Munro’s Flying Ambulance Corps in Flanders (1914-1918)**

#### **Part 1: A Try Out**

*Patrick Vanleene*

### 40

#### **World War One’s Impact on American Sports**

*Peter C. Stewart*





## THE CHAOS OF BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS: GENERAL ERICH VON FALKENHAYN AND THE JULY CRISIS OF 1914

HOLGER H. HERWIG

Erich von Falkenhayn is best known for his infamous attrition tactics at Verdun on the Meuse (Maas) River between February and December 1916. As outlined in his “Christmas Memorandum” of 1915, Falkenhayn sought to strike indirectly at Germany’s main enemy, Britain, by “knocking its best sword,” France, “out of its hands.” Specifically, the general hoped to demoralize France and to bleed its armies “to death” by massive frontal attacks against this ancient Frankish fort, which no French commander dared not to defend. He was right. The “Meuse mill” eventually ground up some 340,000 men on either side.

Falkenhayn is less well known for his role in the July Crisis of 1914. German decision making largely has been reduced to endless debates about the

vacillating roles of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg and Chief of the General Staff Helmuth von Moltke the Younger in Berlin that month. But the decisive moments of that bureaucratic chaos took place outside the capital, at Frederick the Great’s Neues Palais on the western edge of Potsdam’s Park Sanssouci. Its unwavering force was Prussian War Minister von Falkenhayn.

Falkenhayn has remained an enigma. He did not belong to Alfred von Schlieffen’s trusted inner circle, and he spent only short periods of time on the General Staff. Except for a stint as military advisor in China (1896-1903), where his reports found favor with Wilhelm II, Falkenhayn spent years with the Line in unspectacular assignments in Braunschweig,





Neues Palais in Potsdam. Kaiser Wilhelm II resided here. (Courtesy LOC)

Metz, and Magdeburg. Senior commanders found him unapproachable, a “provincial parvenue,” a social climber, a gambler, and unworthy of a corps command. He yearned to return to China or to take employment in the Turkish Army. Instead, Wilhelm II appointed him to be Prussian War Minister in July 1913. Therewith Falkenhayn became responsible for finances, mobilization, housing, armaments, pay, clothing, and rotation of Prussian troops.

For weeks after the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, German leaders had done their best to avoid taking decisive action. After finally issuing Vienna the famous “blank check” on 5 July, which promised Berlin’s “full support” for any Austro-Hungarian action against Serbia, home of the assassins, German leaders had debarked the capital for their annual summer holidays. Was it simply a ploy to give Europe a false sense of calm? Whatever calm may initially have existed evaporated on 23 July when Vienna handed Belgrade an ultimatum that, among other things, demanded it allow Vienna a free hand in hunting down the killers on Serbian soil. Therewith the diplomatic phase of the July Crisis ended. The ball was now in the courts of the military in Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg.

On 24 July 1914, Falkenhayn rushed back to Berlin from his holiday on the East Frisian Island of Juist. The next morning, he learned that Vienna had rejected Belgrade’s acceptance of most of the

ultimatum of 23 July, had broken diplomatic relations with Serbia, and had ordered partial mobilization of its army. Falkenhayn immediately recognized the seriousness of the moment. Austria-Hungary, he noted in his diary, “would have declared any Serbian reply as insufficient. It simply wants the great reckoning.”

That Falkenhayn’s role in the July Crisis was largely ignored is due to his reserve and closeness, as well as to a lack of documentation. Unlike so many of the First World War German generals—Erich Ludendorff first and foremost—Falkenhayn did not take part in the post-1918 vituperative debates about who had “lost” the war. Following the end of the Hohenzollern monarchy, Falkenhayn took up residence in Lindstedt Castle, a stone’s throw from the Neues Palais. There he stored his personal papers. Undoubtedly, the editors of what would become the German official history of the First World War (*Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*) contacted the general to supply them with some of his materials. The near-total destruction of the Army Archive at Potsdam by British bombers on 14 April 1945 allows no further insight into the matter. All we know is that Falkenhayn’s widow, Ida, in “an eccentric mood” destroyed a good deal of the general’s papers in the 1930s, and that the rest were lost when the little castle was plundered in April 1945.

But sometimes historians get lucky!  
In November 1927 Ida von Falkenhayn had



Schloss Lindstadt in Potsdam, von Falkenhayn’s post-war residence. (Courtesy SLUB Dresden / Deutsche Fotothek / Richard Peter sen.)



“confidentially” provided the Army Archive with a handwritten copy of part of Falkenhayn’s war diary, with the annotation “may not be published.” The Archive passed this on to a subsection, the Military History Research Office, for the work on the official history. Thus, it survived. After the Second World War, that document found its way into the Military Archive of the National Peoples’ Army; by 2000 it had been transferred to the Federal Military Archive at Freiburg. There, I was one of the first scholars to research the diary fragment—which covers the critical days from 26 July to 1 August 1914.

## Diary Summary

The Kaiser returned from his annual North Sea cruise shortly after noon on 27 July. He took up residence at the Neues Palais in Potsdam, where he remained for the duration of the July Crisis. This set in motion a hectic shuttle of senior aides. Countless Daimler-Maybach, Horch, Mercedes, and Opel limousines raced between the Königsplatz (General Staff), the Leipziger Straße (War Ministry) and the



Wilhelmstrasse 77, The Reich Chancellery, formerly the Radziwill city palace (Palais Schulenburg). The Führerbunker is behind and partly beneath the building. The Reich Chancellery is no longer extant.

Wilhelmstraße (Reichs Chancellery Palace as well as Foreign Office) in the capital and the Neues Palais in Potsdam.

The first critical meeting took place at the Palais on 27 July, the day of the Kaiser’s return, when he summoned Bethmann Hollweg, Moltke, and Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz as well as senior cabinet chiefs to Potsdam to brief him on the Serbian crisis. Falkenhayn, who had to cool his heels in an anteroom, found out after the meeting that it had been decided to “fight the matter through [to war], cost what it may.” The moment he had longed for finally had arrived. On his own, he ordered all troops from their barracks back to base, the railroads to institute “protective measures,” and the government to purchase “wheat in great quantities” for the anticipated war.

But nothing was ever quite that certain with Wilhelm II. When Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg and Foreign Secretary Gottlieb von Jagow finally handed him the Serbian reply to Vienna on the morning of 28 July, Wilhelm incredibly penned: “A brilliant performance for a period of grace of only 48 hours. Therewith every cause to go to war has been removed.” The next day the Kaiser informed Jagow, and later also Moltke, that with Serbia’s “submissive” reply of 25 July, “every reason to go to war” had vanished. Both men were delighted. Falkenhayn was furious. He had long believed war in Europe to be inevitable, and now the moment to be ripe.

After a brief, indecisive meeting with the chancellor, Falkenhayn again raced out to the Neues Palais to encourage Wilhelm II to draw the sword. The Kaiser demurred. The general’s diary fully vents his fury. Wilhelm II had abandoned his strident stance of the day before and was now willing to “sacrifice Austria-Hungary” to maintain peace. “He gives false speeches.” Barely concealing his anger, Falkenhayn brazenly “pointed out” to Wilhelm II “that he no longer was master of the situation.” Having just been informed that Vienna had declared war on Belgrade and that Russia was mobilizing four military districts bordering Austria-Hungary, Falkenhayn demanded that the Kaiser as Supreme War Lord immediately declare “a threatening state of danger of war,” the precursor to full mobilization. To Falkenhayn’s dismay, Wilhelm II refused.



Falkenhayn's actions that 28-29 July laid bare the polychratic chaos of the German command system. Article 11 of the German Constitution of April 1871 accorded the Kaiser sole right "to declare war and to conclude peace." Neither the General Staff, the Navy Office, the Foreign Office, nor even the Parliament could exercise that power. And Wilhelm II jealously protected that power, with the result that Imperial Germany never developed an institution analogous to the British Committee of Imperial Defense, the French Superior Counsel of National Defense, or the American National Security Council. All lines of command ran through Wilhelm II. As is well known, he was utterly incapable of coordinating Imperial Germany's diplomatic and military policy. Thus, the Kaiser needed to gain consensus within his inner circle. But who could forge that consensus?

Not Wilhelm II. After the first critical meeting of 27 July, at the request of Bethmann Hollweg he spent two days rushing off a flurry of telegrams to King George V and Tsar Nicholas II: to persuade the former to pledge British neutrality in a coming war and to push responsibility for that anticipated war on to the latter. He succeeded in neither. And while Wilhelm II was scribbling royal briefs to his cousins, the cavalcade of limousines shuttling between Berlin and Potsdam went on at a breathless pace. As did a series of bizarre meetings among chancellor, war minister, chief of the General Staff, and foreign secretary that took place mornings and nights at the Chancellery—punctuated by the usual dashes out to Potsdam. Moltke demanded war with France and Russia. Bethmann Hollweg feared that weakness now would amount to "castration"—only to do an about-face and urge restraint and ask Habsburg armies to "halt in Belgrade." Jagow was a cypher. Tirpitz was silent. Wilhelm II remained indecisive.

July 29 was critical for Falkenhayn. His diary sheds full light on that day. In the morning he received the "certain news" that both France and Britain had mobilized, while "we sit on our hands!!" He rushed to the Chancellery to request a decree proclaiming a state of war in Berlin. Bethmann Hollweg refused. Falkenhayn later returned with Moltke in tow. While the war minister demanded that a "threatening state of danger of war" be declared, the chief of the General

Staff was content to request an order to secure the Reich's most important transportation facilities. The chancellor sided with Moltke. All the while, the diplomatic and military plenipotentiaries of the Reich's major federal states buzzed around the offices of the General Staff, the War Ministry and the Foreign Office hoping to glean information on the situation.

Exasperated, Falkenhayn engineered an audience with Wilhelm II for Bethmann Hollweg, Moltke, and himself. It was classic *opéra bouffé*. At 4:25 p.m. the three men, joined by Chief of the Military Cabinet Moriz von Lyncker, stepped out of their limousines at the Neues Palais. This 29 July gathering has sometimes been called the "Potsdam Crown Council." It was nothing of the kind. In the best tradition of "divide and conquer," Wilhelm II received his senior advisors in small groups to brief them at length on his views of the situation. In this way he evaded a hard round table discussion of the July Crisis.

The three generals and the chancellor were first received in audience. Bethmann Hollweg urged caution and diplomacy. Wilhelm II at once concurred. But just as quickly he flip-flopped. Falkenhayn's diary yet again informs us. "As he says, the ball, once it has begun to roll, cannot be stopped anymore." The chancellor turned red in the face. But just when Falkenhayn believed that he had carried the day, Bethmann Hollweg, surprisingly seconded by Moltke, once more urged restraint. Yet again, Wilhelm II concurred. There the matter rested.

When chancellor and generals were dismissed at 6 p.m., Wilhelm II called in his brother, Prince Heinrich. The admiral had just returned from Britain where, he informed his royal brother, King George V had promised him that nation's neutrality in a war! After this forty-five-minute private audience, a delighted Kaiser had the senior admirals—State Secretary of the Navy Office Alfred von Tirpitz, Chief of the Navy Cabinet Georg Alexander von Müller, and Chief of the Admiralty Staff Hugo von Pohl—ushered into the Star Chamber. Prince Heinrich stayed with the naval leaders. Wilhelm II delivered his customary lengthy monologue. He informed them that he agreed with the chancellor's cautious stance, and that Britain had promised Heinrich neutrality in a coming war. This



raised eyebrows! But Wilhelm II assured the admirals, “I have the word of a king, and that is enough for me.” Bethmann Hollweg spied his opening. If the July Crisis could thus be peacefully overcome, then Germany and Britain surely could reach an understanding in the naval arms race. The Kaiser flatly rejected such thinking; his naval leaders agreed. A “very exhausted” Wilhelm II dismissed his admirals.

Chancellor, foreign secretary, chief of the General Staff, and war minister motored back to Berlin immediately after the Potsdam *soirée*. The hard-headed discussions that should have been held at the Neues Palais were now transferred to the Chancellery. The four men that night debated the all-decisive question whether Russia’s partial mobilization should trigger Germany’s full mobilization since the Schlieffen Plan was predicated upon speed; put differently, Germany had to be first to mobilize in order quickly to defeat France before turning East. Again, Falkenhayn’s diary is central, even though it cannot adequately reveal the passion of the spoken words. Falkenhayn pressed for a declaration of premobilization. Moltke “quietly, *very quietly*” disagreed; Bethmann Hollweg more forcefully. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov had cleverly assured German Ambassador Friedrich von Pourtalés that he did not consider Russia’s partial mobilization to mean war. Bethmann Hollweg was desperate for internal politics (Social Democrats) as well as external policy (Great Britain) to force Russia to make the first move in what he called the coming “great debacle.”

Falkenhayn was angry. Britain, he lectured Bethmann Hollweg, Jagow and Moltke, “had always stood where its advantage lay.” He deemed Sazonov’s assurance to Pourtalés “for a direct lie.” He did not trust the Russians. He had in vain pressed for mobilizations that very morning and had found no takers. But to show that he also could dabble in bureaucratic chaos, Falkenhayn then incredibly informed the group that “a few hours more or less” were immaterial for Germany’s mobilization!

Bethmann Hollweg, the dour “Hamlet of German politics,” had not played with open cards. In fact, he believed that he had an ace up his sleeve. Shortly after Moltke and Falkenhayn departed, he called in British Ambassador Sir Edward Goschen. If



Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg. (Courtesy LOC)

Britain promised to remain neutral in the coming war, Bethmann allowed, Imperial Germany would offer it a neutrality pact, guarantee the independence of the Netherlands, and annex no conquered French lands. Goschen was aghast at this “shameful” offer. Bethmann Hollweg had played his “trump card” too late.

There remained the final act of this farcical opera. July 30, Falkenhayn bitterly noted in his diary, was a day of “endless negotiations.” And of bitter recriminations. At a desultory meeting of the Prussian Ministry of State that morning, the chancellor confessed that “the hope for England was now zero” and, using the Kaiser’s words of 27 July, that “the stone has begun to roll.” Bethmann Hollweg called Moltke and Falkenhayn to the Chancellery later that afternoon. Another pointless debate about premobilization ensued. Falkenhayn had enough. Bethmann Hollweg and “his people” at the Foreign Office, he scribbled in his diary, apparently still “hoped for a miracle.” None was in the



offing. During a heated debate, the war minister demanded that a “threatening state of danger of war” be declared at once. The situation, he noted, had “progressively become unbearable.”

The three men met again later that night. Moltke surprised all by declaring that he was in favor of issuing the threatening-state-of-war declaration the next day. That done, Bethmann Hollweg and Moltke furiously debated with whom responsibility for a possible war should rest! To Falkenhayn’s great surprise, Moltke then “decisively declared” that he now was in favor of war “without delay.” Throughout that night, Moltke paced up and down in his study. Was the Reich on the brink of “the world war?”

The next day, 31 July, Moltke joined Falkenhayn at the Chancellery. “Unfortunately, Moltke very nervous,” Falkenhayn noted. The three men met again around noon. Then a bolt out of the blue from Pourtalés in St. Petersburg: Russia had ordered full mobilization of its army and its fleet. The trio from

Berlin at once telephoned Potsdam for permission to formally declare a “threatening state of danger of war” in the Reich. And they advised Wilhelm II finally to come to Berlin in this hour of decision. The monarch declined. Instead, he ordered his military and political leaders to report to him at the Neues Palais between 2 and 3 in the afternoon. And to bring the premobilization order with them. The generals were well aware that in the German military system, mobilization meant war.

There again was no open debate about the issue of war or peace at the Neues Palais. Wilhelm II merely delivered another of his lengthy monologues, in which he repeatedly assured those assembled that Russia with its mobilization bore the entire brunt for starting a European war. He then issued the order that a “threatening state of danger of war” existed. Falkenhayn was deeply moved by his Supreme War Lord. “His composure and his speech here worthy of a German Kaiser! Worthy of a Prussian King.” Moltke, with tears in his eyes, read a passionate “Appeal to the German People!” Bethmann Hollweg was livid. Such political pronouncements could only come from him. Which enmeshed the chancellor in a heated run-in with his master.

On the morning of 1 August 1914 Falkenhayn decided to undertake the next necessary step: he convinced a “very reluctant” Bethmann Hollweg to motor out to Potsdam to obtain the Kaiser’s signature on the actual mobilization order. Just as Bethmann Hollweg was arranging for Moltke and Tirpitz to join them, a call came in from Wilhelm II: the four men were to come to Potsdam with the formal Mobilization Order in hand. Moltke and Falkenhayn had to force their way to the castle through thousands of cheering onlookers.

High drama ensued. At 5 p.m., the Kaiser, standing at the desk made of planks from Horatio Nelson’s HMS *Victory*, a gift from his grandmother, Queen Victoria, signed the Mobilization Order. Falkenhayn could not restrain his joy. “God bless Your Majesty and Your weapons. God protect the beloved fatherland.” The two men shook hands, tears in their eyes. Ten minutes later, Moltke and Falkenhayn were on their way back to Berlin. At the War Ministry, Falkenhayn ordered his staff to distribute the



General Helmuth von Moltke, The Younger.  
(Courtesy LOC)



Mobilization Order to all commands. Cheers echoed down the hallways.

But once more, bureaucratic chaos trumped rational decision making. Barely back in his office, Falkenhayn was recalled to Potsdam. A bomb had landed on the Kaiser's desk: a telegram from German ambassador Karl von Lichnowsky in London, that the Cabinet would guarantee British and French neutrality in the coming war (with Russia) if Berlin promised not to invade France. Joy abounded. Wilhelm II immediately ordered that the 16th Infantry Division, which was about to invade Luxembourg to kick start the Schlieffen Plan, remain at Trier. There would be no two-front war. The Kaiser wanted the Western Army of 1.6 million men organized into 23 active and 11 reserve corps turned East at once. Moltke was aghast. "The deployment of a host of millions of men," he lectured his Supreme War Lord, "cannot be improvised." Wilhelm II viciously degraded his chief of the General Staff: "Your uncle [the Elder Moltke] would have given me a different answer."

Moltke then engaged Bethmann Hollweg in what Falkenhayn termed a "lively and dramatic discussion." "With trembling lips" the chief of the General Staff made clear that under the auspices of Schlieffen's blueprint France would have to be invaded first. Most officers sided with the chancellor. Moltke, Falkenhayn noted, was "totally broken." The chief of the General Staff motored back to headquarters in Berlin, where he poured out "tears of frustration." For his part, Falkenhayn remained silent, skeptical about any such British promise. "Perfidious Albion" was not a trustworthy partner.

Moltke's "nervous" and "broken" state arose from three considerations. First, already at the "crown council" of 29 July he had lectured the Kaiser that Germany would "never hit it again so well as we do now with France's and Russia's expansion of their armies incomplete." Now was the moment to strike. Second, at the operational level, time was of the essence. Germany had to be first to mobilize, to cross enemy borders, and to annihilate the Anglo-French-Belgian armies at the gates of Paris within forty days of mobilization, before turning 180 degrees to meet the Russian "steamroller." Delay meant defeat. Third, at

the grand strategic level, Moltke feared the consequences of what he was certain would be a European war. Such a conflict "would destroy civilization in all of Europe for decades to come." How to square the circle?

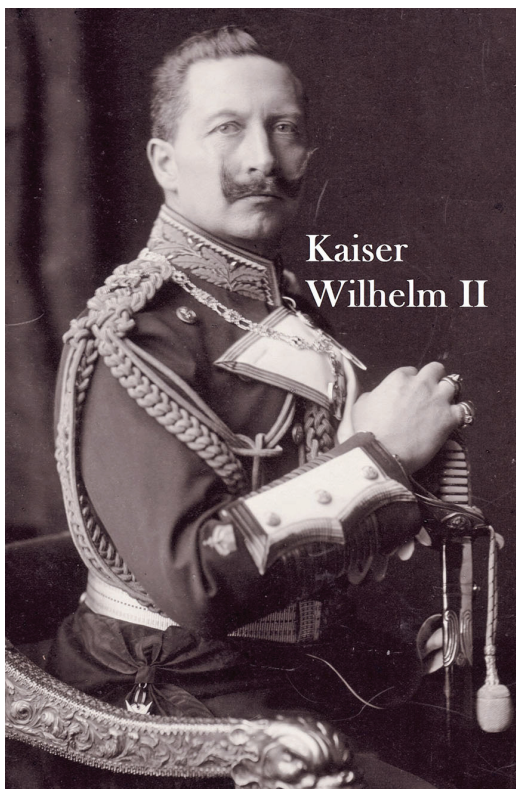
As Moltke pondered his next step, another bomb from London exploded in this tense atmosphere: Foreign Secretary Edward Grey telegraphed a promise of British neutrality in the coming war—even if Germany and France went to war! Wilhelm II was ecstatic and ordered champagne all around in the Star Chamber. But Falkenhayn's initial skepticism soon proved to have been sound: at 11:23 p.m. Grey informed the Germans that the first telegram had been sent in error! Britain would "mediate" the Serbian matter only if Berlin guaranteed Belgium's neutrality. Wilhelm II ordered Moltke to return to Potsdam. "Now do whatever it is you want." Moltke gave the 16th Division the order to invade Luxembourg.

As the first German troop formations marched off to war on 4 August 1914, Wilhelm II cheerfully assured them, "You will be back home before the leaves fall from the trees." Falkenhayn as always was more realistic and more skeptical. He bade his old unit, the 4th Guards Grenadiers, farewell with prophetic words: "We are going into a war to be or not to be, into a terribly difficult struggle. This war will last at least one-and-one-half years." Still, looking back on the July Crisis he concluded: "Even if we go under as a result of this still it was beautiful."

## Diary Significance

Imperial Germany is widely considered to have begun the First World War in a bold and well organized "bid for world power," as historian Fritz Fischer famously put it. This theory posits that decision makers in Berlin carefully weighed all options and acted rationally to maximize their utility. But, rational expectations theory ignore reality. Germany in July 1914 most certainly did not function as a rational, unitary actor. Rather, as Graham T. Allison in his famous book *Essence of Decision Making* (1971) suggested, foreign policy and military decisions are often the product of political resultants; that is, of "politicking and negotiation" by the individual leaders

in government positions. In the process, personality, charisma, skills of persuasion, and interpersonal relationships all play their roles. Individual leaders often holding different preferences compete over the substance and conduct of policy, based on their organizational roles. Allison termed this the “bureaucratic politics” model. This perfectly applies to the major German players in Berlin and Potsdam.



Kaiser  
Wilhelm II

What I have termed “bureaucratic chaos” ruled Berlin in July 1914. While all players pursued a common goal—the extension of German rule over Central Europe—they nevertheless were divided as to the means of accomplishing this. Bethmann Hollweg hoped to achieve his aims by diplomacy. Falkenhayn chose the path of war. Jagow and Tirpitz preferred silence. Wilhelm II and Moltke fluctuated between both options, never able to steer a clear, steady course. Policies changed day by day and hour by hour. Unsubstantiated telegrams and rumors caused major policy shifts. Personal preferences trumped policy goals. Morning and midnight meetings as well as motorcar relays between Berlin and Potsdam brought little substance, not to mention calm, to

decision making. All to the confusion of the Reich’s single reliable ally, Austria-Hungary. It is little wonder that an exasperated Habsburg Foreign Minister, Leopold von Berchtold, cried out at the height of the July Crisis: “Who rules in Germany? Moltke or Bethmann?” I suggest that as close as Berlin ever came to “rule” in those historic days was provided by the persistent War Minister Erich von Falkenhayn.

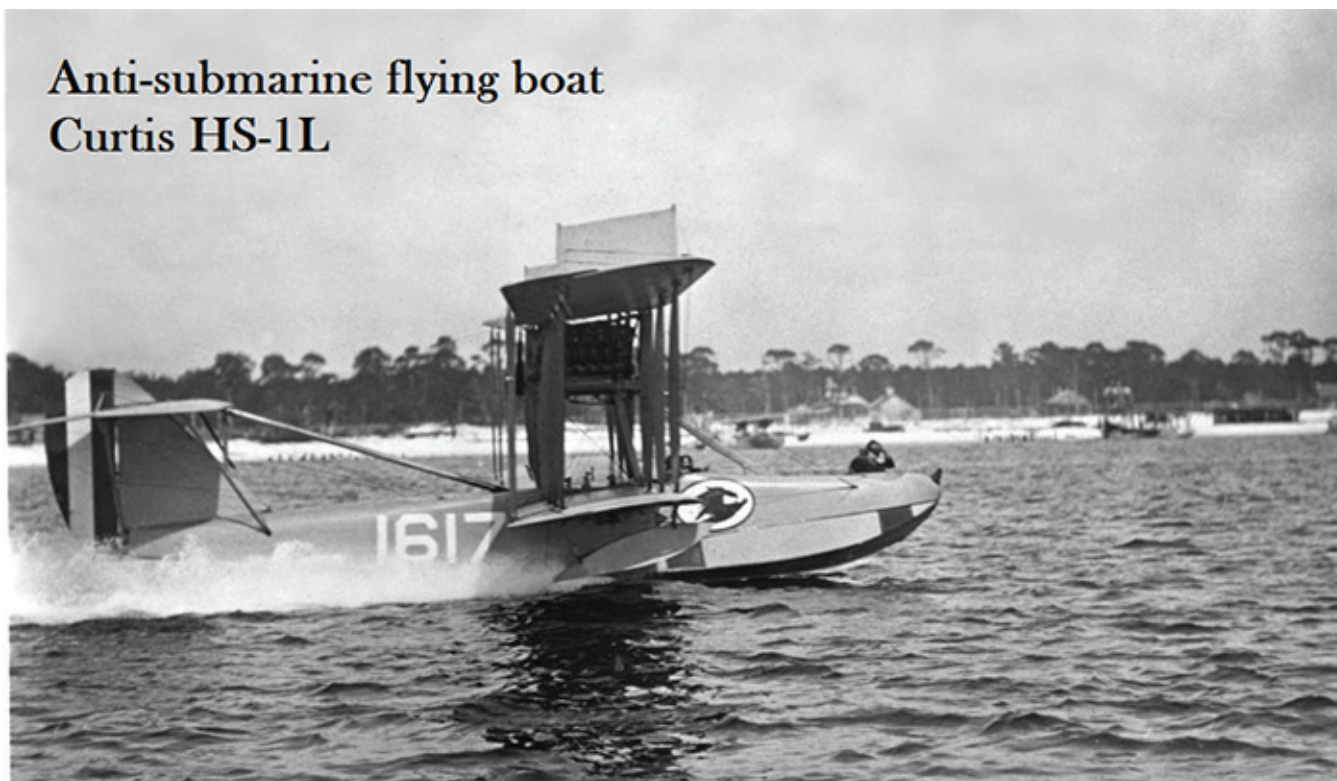
## About the Author



Holger H. Herwig was born in Hamburg, Germany, on 25 September 1941. Dr. Herwig taught at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, from 1971 until 1989. He served as Head of the Department of History at Calgary from 1991 until 1996. He was a Visiting Professor of Strategy at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, in 1985-86. He has held major research grants from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, NATO, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Dr. Herwig wrote the prize winning *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918*; and *The Marne, 1914*. He has coauthored with David Bercuson *Deadly Seas; The Destruction of the Bismarck*; and *One Christmas in Washington*. Herwig joined Bercuson for three weeks in the Atlantic to produce “James Cameron’s Expedition: Bismarck” for the Discovery Channel.



## Anti-submarine flying boat Curtis HS-1L



# FIGHTING BACK: U.S. NAVAL DEFENSE FORCES AND THE GERMAN THREAT “OVER HERE” IN 1918

PAUL HODOS

**The Germans Are Coming** -- In the summer of 1918, the eastern shore of the United States and Canada became a battleground as five German submarines attacked shipping in the western Atlantic. The U-boats conducted a small but desperate campaign to disrupt convoys, sinking everything from small fishing boats to large merchant ships traveling alone, in an attempt to force the Americans to recall part of their fleet in European waters to defend the coast. The Germans hoped their long-range campaign would help take the pressure off the U-boats in European waters while also sinking ships at the beginning of their voyage across the Atlantic rather than waiting for them at their European destinations. The Germans believed that utilizing Germany's small long-range submarine fleet would cost the Allies much more in defensive



A German postcard depicting an ex-merchant u-cruiser on the surface. The 5.9 inch guns can be clearly seen on either side of the conning tower along with the ship's boat lashed to the deck toward the stern. Note the large deck around the conning tower which served as the gun platform for the overly large artillery carried by these submarines. (Author's collection)

resources than the little effort Germany planned to spend on what amounted to offensive raids across the wide Atlantic Ocean. They also hoped the U-boats in American waters would sink enough tonnage to impact the huge amounts of American men and supplies pouring into France every month.

The U-boats, once they arrived in North American waters, seemingly avoided convoy escorts if they could and fought many long battles with lonely armed merchant ships, which were often faster than the German submarines. The most effective defense for ships traveling alone was arming them with artillery they could use to attack a U-boat while putting on steam to get away. Engagements between armed merchant vessels and U-boats were fairly common by 1918 and many U-boat targets were able to exit a dangerous encounter utilizing this tactic. Convoys for more important ships also helped to defeat the Kaiserliche Marine U-boats. The convoys were made up of the more important ships that carried vital wartime cargo. However, there were never enough escort vessels to protect all of the shipping.

In American waters there were many ships traveling alone, which encouraged the Germans to target this hitherto untouched area where they could potentially sink a lot more tonnage than in the heavily patrolled waters off Europe. However, the American and Canadian coasts were not undefended and boasted an extensive radio and telephone communications net, as well as numerous Coast Guard Lifesaving stations that could act as a submarine spotting service, heavily defended harbors, small patrol boats and submarine chasers, destroyers, and submarine hunting teams that were made up of a destroyer and submarine chasers. The US Navy also had minesweepers on station and six Naval Air Stations that were supplied with planes armed with one bomb and sometimes a defensive machine gun. The air stations were mostly grouped in northeastern waters, but there was also one in Virginia and one in Florida to cover the southern coast. Later in the campaign the Canadians would get an air station in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The coastal defense forces off Canada and the United States did not often engage or even sight the five U-boats on their doorstep from May to October

1918. The patrol aircraft, minesweepers, destroyers, and small submarine patrol vessels did not have the technological advancements of the Second World War such as radar to help them in their quest to find the enemy. The defense of the western Atlantic was achieved through ceaseless air and naval patrols, radio reports from attacked ships, and intelligence from the British codebreakers in Room 40 who were tirelessly reading decoded German messages. These overstretched forces had over 2,000 miles of coast to defend from Germany's long-range submarine cruiser force with their large deck guns, torpedoes, and mines primed and ready to bring the war to the United States and Canada.

The following is the story of two combat encounters "over here" in support of the Allied war effort "over there" with a special emphasis on what was accomplished by these early submarine hunters in the short-lived war zone off the coast of the United States and Canada in 1918. The battles were quickly forgotten after the war except in a few news articles or in US Navy circles whose leadership remembered when the Germans had attacked United States' waters in World War I. The Imperial German Navy (Kaiserliche Marine) sinkings were eclipsed in the imaginations of Americans by the more numerous and successful attacks against American shipping by Nazi U-boats in World War II.

As will be seen below, the Americans of World War I had two solid chances to sink U-boats off the coast of the United States in July and August of 1918.

## **A Battle at the Beach**

The first engagement started on a hot summer morning at 10:00 on July 21, 1918, when the *U-156* appeared three miles off of Nauset beach in Cape Cod near the town of Orleans, Massachusetts. The *U-156* came equipped with two massive 5.9-inch deck guns, torpedoes, and mines. The *U-156* also had a cable cutter attached, which allowed her to sever undersea communications cables. A key cable running directly to France from the United States was located at the site of the engagement and was likely the reason the *U-156* was in that area.



The *U-156* was originally built as an underwater merchant vessel for trade with the United States. Its mission was to sneak around the British blockade that had been strangling Germany since 1914. However, that peaceful mission ended when war was declared between Germany and the U.S. in April 1917. The *U-156* was converted into a warship, a submarine freighter with powerful deck guns to stop and sink merchant vessels on the surface.



Kapitänleutnant Richard Feldt commanded the *U-156* on her cruise to North America. Feldt was a U-boat novice when he took over the huge submarine and her veteran crew, but soon showed a knack for daring exploits. (Author's collection)

The *U-156* opened the engagement by shelling a tug and four barges about three miles offshore in full view of a crowd of American beach-goers. A Coast Guard Lifesaving station tower erected on the beach also witnessed the attack and sent a team of rescuers out in a rowboat to save the seamen and their families on the tug and barges. The Coast Guard tower also called the nearby Chatham Naval Air Station to report the attack by telephone. Chatham Naval Air Station was equipped with *R-9* biplane seaplanes and *HS-1L* flying boats, each armed with one Mark IV aerial bomb. The bombs had the unfortunate reputation of not exploding on impact. The air station was so close to the action on the beach that the staff had actually heard the U-boat's artillery open fire before the call from the watchtower had even come in. In the meantime, the *U-156* appeared to have overshot her targets and accidentally shelled some empty stretches of beach and marsh. In so doing, the *U-156* became the first foreign enemy to shell the United States' mainland since the Mexican War.

A half hour after the attack started, an *HS-1L* flying boat from the Chatham Naval Air Station

finally arrived — most of the station's planes had been searching for a missing patrol blimp. The *HS-1L* was manned by pilot Eric Lingard, co-pilot Edward Shields, and Chief Special Mechanic Edward Howard in the bomber seat. According to Shields, the *U-156* did not notice them until the last minute as the plane made a bomb run and the deck became a mass of running men. There was only one problem. The bomb failed to drop. The release malfunctioned and so the *HS-1L* came around again only to have the release fail a second time. On the third pass, Howard jumped onto the lower wing while holding a strut and released the bomb with his hand. The bomb dropped just a few feet from the *U-156* but did not explode. The Mark IV's reported failure to detonate during prior training runs was apparently not uncommon. The *U-156*, due to defective American munitions, was safe for now.

Captain Philip Eaton, commander of the Chatham Naval Air Station, was just landing as the engagement offshore reached a fever pitch. Eaton was searching for the missing blimp but immediately prepped his *R-9* seaplane for combat once he heard about the attack. As Eaton approached, the *U-156* fired four shots at him with the elevated deck guns and missed. Eaton made his bomb run at 500 feet despite the recommendation that any bomb drop be done from at least 1,000 feet to avoid damaging the aircraft. The bomb landed about 100 feet from the *U-156* and also failed to explode!

However, on the bright side for the Americans, the *U-156* started to get underway. The planes had clearly spooked the Germans, based on reports of them running around the deck during both aerial attacks, and in a later conversation the *U-156*'s crew had with a captured sailor when they asked nervously if he had seen any patrol aircraft in the area. The *U-156* had sunk the four barges and damaged the tug but the tug would be refitted and continue to ply the seas. Kapitänleutnant Richard Feldt, the novice commander of *U-156*, likely had to shorten his show off Cape Cod due to the American planes. However, he had made his point and the daring engagement was covered widely in American newspapers. If the bombs had exploded, the *U-156* would likely have been damaged if not destroyed.



An American R-9 seaplane from the Chatham Naval Air Station attacked the *U-156* off Nauset Beach on 21 July 1918.  
(Courtesy National Naval Aviation Museum)

## The First True Victory on the Coast

Almost three weeks later, on 10 August 1918, the Brazilian passenger liner *Uberaba* was about 150 miles off the North Carolina coast when she was stopped by a shot across her bow. The *Uberaba*'s crew was confused as to who was forcing their ship to halt her transit of 250 civilian passengers and 100 American servicemen. The *Uberaba* soon realized what they had thought was an American patrol boat was actually the *U-140*.

The *U-140* was one of the largest German submarines to serve in World War I. The *U-140*'s class of U-boat was not originally built for merchant trade as the *U-156* and her sisters had been. The *U-140* was built for war from the start and boasted a length of over 300 feet, six torpedo tubes, two 5.9-inch deck guns, two more 3.5-inch deck guns, and a faster speed. The Germans chose Korvettenkapitän Waldemar Kophamel to command her. Kophamel was a veteran U-boat man and had served aboard some of Germany's earliest submarines. The *U-140* was a technical marvel and much better than anything the Allies could produce for range and weaponry. However, the *U-140* was also prone to mechanical failures and oil leaks due to what Kophamel thought was cheap workmanship by the

Germania Yard. Despite her weaknesses the *U-140* was still a formidable weapon that would prove dangerous to American shipping.



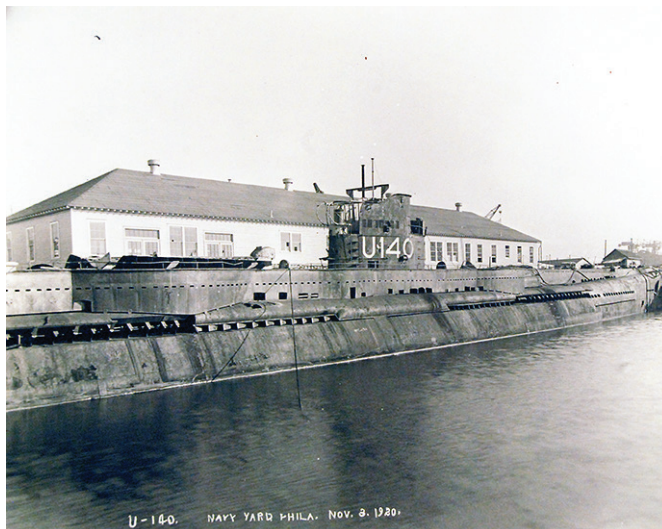
Korvettenkapitän Waldemar Kophamel was one of the most experienced U-boat commanders of World War I and the skipper of *U-140*. He was highly decorated and served on submarines throughout the whole war. The German Navy wanted him to lead their newest and best long range cruiser submarine into battle off the American coast. (Courtesy NHHC)

The *Uberaba*, once she realized her mistake, ran off at full speed while zigzagging and radioing for help. The new American destroyer USS *Stringham* heard the *Uberaba*'s distress calls. The *Stringham* raced to the scene while the *U-140*'s shells started to splatter the *Uberaba*'s deck. The *Stringham*, on her way to convoy duty, was only 20 minutes away from the attack. As the *Stringham* approached she very skillfully used the *Uberaba* as a visual block so the *U-140* could not see her approach from that angle. The *Stringham* got close enough so the *U-140* was barely able to dive and when she did she was subjected to an accurate



depth charge attack by the *Stringham*. *Stringham* dropped 15 depth charges on the *U-140* and was aided in her attack by an oil slick that *U-140* was trailing due to her earlier mentioned shoddy workmanship.

The first charges shook up the *U-140* pretty badly and Kophamel ordered the *U-140* to a 245-foot depth. The submarine took on 45 tons of water while Kophamel hid from his attacker. The *Stringham* noted a huge oil slick on the surface and made sure the *Uberaba* got away from the area before leaving for her convoy duty. Kophamel later surfaced and criticized the *Stringham* for moving on before making sure the *U-140* was sunk. However, the *Stringham* had won the first clear victory for the American coastal defense forces by forcing *U-140* to start her journey back home after only a short time on station off the U.S. coast. *U-140* was leaking oil badly and, although she sank and attacked more ships on the way back, she ran out of fuel at the end of her voyage and had to be towed into port. The *Stringham* had done its job well, saved an Allied passenger liner, and scored the clearest victory against the U-cruiser force off of North American shores by sending the *U-140* home before she could make a respectable tonnage score in American coastal waters.



The *U-140* at a pier in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. The U-boat was given to the Americans for study after the war and the technology within helped to improve the U.S. submarines that were built before and during World War II. (Courtesy NHC)

## Aftermath

The American and Canadian navies would have several other small engagements with U-boats near or in North American coastal waters during those hectic days from May to October of 1918. However, none of those encounters came as close to sinking a submarine as the two combat actions described above. The Americans had shown that aggressive patrolling, strategically placed Naval Air Stations, a commitment to reliable radio and telephone communications systems, coastal convoys, armed patrol craft, minesweepers, a few destroyers, and Coast Guard rescue personnel along with messages about a U-boat's approach across the Atlantic, care of British codebreakers, could thwart the designs of Germany's small long range submarine force. In the end, Kaiser Wilhelm II was disappointed with the U-cruiser campaign and scoffed at the inadequate tonnage scores obtained by his technological wonders that were too few in number to make a true difference in the war on shipping.

Unfortunately, unlike during World War I, the United States would be much less prepared for Germany's second U-boat onslaught in 1942. Navy brass in the Second World War was aware of the prior campaign but could do little to utilize the lessons of that first conflict due to the U.S. Navy's focus on the grave Japanese naval threat in the Pacific. The U.S. Navy did not sink a U-boat until April 1942, four months after the Germans started their assault in American waters. The Germans had an easy time on the coast for about six months in 1942. Of course, in the second war the Allies would utilize radar, convoys, and hunter-killer groups of aircraft carriers and destroyers to suppress the U-boat menace to Allied shipping by making operating on the surface a thing of the past for U-boats by the last few years of the war.

Their World War I forebears had attempted the same task with little more than crude hydrophones, heavy air and sea patrolling, convoys, armed merchant ships, and utilization of depth charges. The combination was enough to limit the World War I U-boat campaign's effectiveness on the American coast and in the main theater of operations around the

British Isles by 1918. The defenders deserve credit for stopping many attacks by forcing the U-boats to submerge, rescuing survivors, and damaging or destroying U-boats whenever possible without the use of later World War II era technological advances that made the U-boat an ineffective anti-shipping weapon. American coastal defense forces had sent the *U-140* back home early with a damaged fuel system while they would have damaged or destroyed the *U-156* had their two aerial bombs worked. Damaging or potentially destroying two of the five U-boats that made it into American waters is not a bad score when one looks at the overwhelming obstacles faced by the defenders.

## About the Author



Paul N. Hodos is a former FBI Supervisory Intelligence Analyst and author who has an undergraduate degree in history from Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, PA and a Master's degree in Strategic Intelligence from the National Intelligence University in Bethesda, MD. He lives in Kensington, Maryland. This article was written from information gathered by the author from research for the book *The Kaiser's Lost Kreuzer*. The book is a comprehensive look at Germany's little-known long-range submarine force and their campaigns off West Africa and North America in 1917 and 1918 through the lens of the amazing wartime adventures of the *U-156*.

## *U-Deutschland*

The super-submarine *Deutschland* was an answer to the British blockade. She was the world's first merchant submarine, essentially an underwater freighter. The *Deutschland* was 315 feet long, had a beam of 30 feet, had two Diesel oil-burning engines delivering 500 hp and could make 14 knots on the surface and 7.5 knots submerged. She carried 750 tons of cargo. On her first transatlantic voyage, she left Bremen June 13, 1916, commanded by Captain Paul König. Nearly 50 years of age, König was a North German Lloyd captain, a merchant mariner who knew nothing about submarines. The ship's destination was Baltimore; she arrived there after 16 days of sailing; 90 miles submerged. Captain König described the epic voyage in his book, *Voyage of the Deutschland* published in 1916.

The crossing was not without perils: e.g., burying the bow of the boat in North Sea mud while leaving the stern exposed above water while evading a British warship, surviving a north Atlantic storm that lasted days, then after a respite, a Gulf Stream hurricane. Approaching the American coast, a fake smokestack was constructed around the periscope to give the appearance of a small freighter as a deception against Royal Navy ships patrolling the coast.

In Baltimore König and his crew were treated as celebrities; they were Captain Nemo and his Nautilus crew. The illusion was lost on König who confessed he'd never read Jules Verne's book. After many celebratory events in Baltimore and with a cargo loaded, the ship returned to Germany where she was greeted with great acclaim. The voyage was probably the best news in 1916.

A second voyage was made to New London, Connecticut. It was the last voyage of the *U-Deutschland*. When the United States entered the war in April 1917, the merchant submarine mission ended. The *U-Deutschland* became the *U-155*, revamped with six torpedo tubes and two 15cm deck guns. Under the command of a new captain, the *U-155* sank 43 ships before the war's end.



## U-Deutschland continued

### Entering Baltimore Harbor

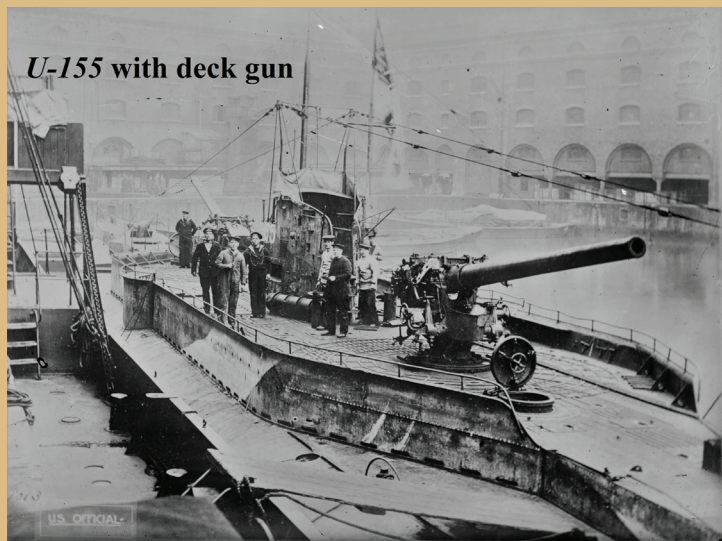


### FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR IN SIBERIA



Souvenir postcard (Courtesy LOC)

### U-155 with deck gun



# MY KIN IN THE GREAT WAR: MY FATHER E. MILES ATKINSON, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S.

PETER ATKINSON

In 1914-18, perhaps the most consequential of all wars, my father (EMA) had a rather unusual war: enlisted in the British Army in 1914, mustered out of the Royal Navy after 1918 – sucked in as a nineteen-year-old British Expeditionary Force volunteer, spat out as a twenty-three-year-old surgeon-lieutenant.



EMA was of course part of that generation that was initially caught up in the war enthusiasm that followed the cascade of catastrophes in the summer of 1914. At the end of it all, he told me, there were none of his school friends left alive. I did not have the

sense -- or the courage? -- to probe any further. I remember hearing Harold Macmillan say, on a visit to Oxford in the 1970s, that for years he could not bear to go back, the place was so full of ghosts.

In 1912, when he left school at the age of 17, my father was just another member of his generation. He had proved to be very strong academically during his years at his father's old school, Epsom College in Surrey, which specialized in preparing students for medicine, something of a family profession. He was good at the natural sciences but also good at the humanities, winning the "Rosebery Prize for English Literature," which was a handsome anthology in four creamy vellum-bound, gold-stamped and gilt-edged volumes that reside in my little library as I write – a prize that entailed being invited to lunch with Lord Rosebery himself: Queen Victoria's penultimate prime minister, widower of a Rothschild, three times winner of the Derby, and owner of a grand house, "The Durdans," in Epsom. Tucked inside one of the books

my father left a somewhat cryptic note, in his small, precise, surgical hand: "... It was his practice to have the boy who won this prize to lunch at his house in Epsom, a practice which must have been something of an ordeal for him. It certainly was for one of his guests, charming though he was."



When he left school, my grandparents offered my father a choice: they could afford Cambridge (customary for the family), or they could pay for a 1912-version of a gap year. He chose the gap year and spent it in Leipzig, learning German -- and skiing! -- under the wing of a cousin posted there with the diplomatic service. This was during the immensely



successful burgeoning German Empire of Bismarck and the Kaiser, the most aggressively rising nation in world-dominating Europe, not yet even half a century old. Everyone was at least partly oblivious to the storm clouds. (And my father did learn his German, well enough, he said, to dream in it – and in the early 1930s to return to scenes of his youth: the first months of Hitler’s Germany, with his surviving letters home bearing stamps still with the portrait of Hindenburg.)



Then in 1913 he came back to London (the university) to begin his medical studies. Studies which, like everything else, were dramatically interrupted in the golden summer of 1914, when the assassination incident of June so swiftly evolved into the terrible guns of August. War with the country where he had so recently been happily living. My father was an only child. I do not know what his parents must have said or felt, but in any case he promptly joined up with his generation, becoming a motorcycle dispatch rider, under fire at Mons. Only three disconnected little

stories have remained with me about those days. One was that he once joined a queue for the services of a French lady herself posted to the Front, but when his turn came, he couldn’t bring himself to go through with it. Another was another queue, for a latrine cabin, and the old woman who was doling out the toilet paper saw his agony and reassured him, “*un moment, monsieur, j’entends le papier.*” The third has two variants: either that at some point his motorbike broke down, and a passing staff car picked him up, or that he on his motorbike encountered a disabled staff car, and went for help. In any case: the passenger was the King. Some years later, when the war was over and my father was a junior doctor at Bart’s Hospital in London, the King was coming on a royal visit, and the hospital was running late, so young Atkinson was despatched to rush down and waylay him if possible. King and Atkinson collided on the stairs. George V looked at him and – so the story goes – said, “Hello – um, Atkinson, was it?” and recalled the entire incident.



By then, however, the war was in the past; at the time, by 1915 the powers that be had decided that a doctor was rarer and more useful than a motorcycle dispatch rider, so he was called home to continue his medical education -- at rather high speed, and in February of 1917 he was commissioned a surgeon-lieutenant in His Majesty’s fleet in the Mediterranean, aboard depot ship HMS *Blenheim*, moored at Mudros. (For years he had one of the silver ashtrays, which each officer received as a memento. It was stolen by a Japanese “houseboy” who worked for my parents in

New York in the late 1930s but who then disappeared without warning: not a “houseboy,” they ultimately concluded, but a spy, with mysterious photographs of himself with the Japanese ambassador in Washington.)

of one of the little destroyers (the *Lizard* -- as in Cornwall); sadly, it is long since lost. What I do have is a small collection of his tiny black and white photos, recording his ship’s movements as the war wound



**Constantinople  
hangings  
November  
1918**



The HMS *Blenheim* was part of the blockade of the Dardanelles, bottling up the German warships *Goeben* and *Breslau* in the Black Sea since 1914. Transferred to the Turkish navy, the German ships could at least harass Russia; but once Russia was out of the war, the ships did eventually break out, in January of 1918 -- when EMA witnessed them being lured into a minefield: the former *Breslau* was sunk, while the *Goeben*, badly damaged, retreated. One family story is that in the celebratory aftermath, a captain renowned for holding his liquor got so drunk that he walked into a wardroom mirror. We think EMA kept a diary, probably with other stories, including some of his “off the books” excursions with a friend, the daredevil captain

down, threading through Greek islands and, in November of 1918, steaming towards Constantinople. The Ottoman Empire was about to fall; there were public hangings, bodies strung up from gibbets.

And then he came home again and resumed his medical training and career: St. Bartholomew’s Hospital -- remember the King’s visit -- with what should have been a bright future, winning the highly prestigious Jacksonian Prize from the Royal College of Surgeons for his essay about “abscess of the brain.” Unfortunately, he had a fine mind but a difficult personality, and in his next step he was somewhat sidelined from London to provincial Bath (though come to that, a practice in Gay Street and a house in the



Crescent are not bad at all); there, already by then twice married, he fell for and swept away his young secretary, fourteen years his junior; and developed the idea for the two of them to escape opprobrium by, in effect, eloping to the wilds of the United States, and New York City -- in the same year that the new young King (Edward VIII) also gave up his destined life in favour of his twice-divorced American "love" (Wallis Simpson). My father did not quite take into account the scale of the Great Depression in the U.S., but in the end they scraped through. When -- appallingly -- a second war came, he offered to return home, but this time the authorities (?) said he was more useful backing Britain in the still-neutral U.S., and so he stayed -- and there, a few years afterwards, the present writer was born. And many years later was by sheer chance present when a small delegation (two or three?) memorably arrived from London all the way to my father's little retirement cottage on Nantucket to present him, some four or five decades after the fact, with his copy of the large bronze medallion which had at last been commissioned as tangible evidence for every winner of their having earned the Jacksonian Prize.

I have illustrations from the unusual arc of his life: his Rosebery Prize books; his much-used, battered German-English dictionary from his year in Leipzig; his First World War medals and his commission, together with a photograph of him in officer's uniform -- he was proud that his Mons Star was the real August-to-November 1914 version, marking him, I suppose, as one of the "old contemptibles;" some of his naval photos; and his Jacksonian Prize medal, along with the "essay" book he wrote that won him the award. Later, when he was in America, he also wrote a full-length book for a general audience, *Behind the Mask of Medicine*: it had the misfortune to be published just before Pearl Harbor, an event that rather overshadowed the book.

So this is a little of my father's story, and something of a reflection of the vast changes of which he was a small part. The life he anticipated was, like everyone's, brutally interrupted and altered by the great war, that global cataclysm that tore up the old maps, the old societies, the old ways. He served in the war, in 1914 and in 1918, in army and navy both, and he was

lucky, he survived, physically unharmed. Then after living the first half of his life in England, his rather scandalous private behavior drove him to spend the second half of his life in America. Where his three Anglo-American children -- by three different wives -- survive him. As does this handful of artifacts, which help record the life of Eric Miles Atkinson, from schoolboy to Mons, from the Med. to medicine. R.I.P.

## About the Author



Peter Atkinson was born to English parents in New York, 1944; educated in US (Harvard) and UK (Oxford). Most of my working life has been spent as a teacher and / or administrator, in US, UK, and (importantly) Tanzania. The final 20+ years at the UN school (UNIS) in New York.

Academic interests are fairly catholic, but especially history and politics. For the last 35+ years, my feet have been firmly planted in three places: New York, London, and Western Massachusetts. My immediate family (academic wife and two accomplished stepsons) are more international than I am. My two half-siblings and I are happy to see some of EMA's life put on record.

## Native American village, 1903



# RESURRECTING THE WARRIOR: AMERICAN INDIAN WWI VETERANS AND SPIRITUALITY

PATRICIA CECIL

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### Indian Country 1917

In 1917, the United States government's American Indian policy physically confined indigenous peoples to reservations and ideologically labeled them as a "vanishing race." The American-Indian Wars had ended decades earlier and in the interim the United States expanded land holdings and resources and embarked on an assimilation policy of "kill the Indian, save the man." During this period, American Indian communities suffered not only numerous losses of land but a loss of cultural materials and spiritual self-determination. Indigenous ways of life and spiritual practices were stamped out by assimilation efforts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and its officers. Assimilation policies had legal ramifications for those

who challenged them, with the Court of Indian Offenses created to quell the dances, rituals, ceremonies, and practitioners seen as a barrier to a more civilized way of life. Healers and faith leaders were arrested for exercising spiritual beliefs, and Indigenous medical practices and sacred dances were suppressed or forced underground by a threat of imprisonment or of withholding government rations. Native Americans could also no longer freely travel to culturally significant locations that lay off reservations, those found off reservation without a BIA agent's permission could be jailed. Native Americans were not U. S. citizens but instead were understood to be members of dependent nations confined to living on reservations as wards of the United States.





Bureau of Indian Affairs office, boarding school and dormitories, Ignacio, Colorado, 1915. (Courtesy LOC)

On the eve of the United States entrance into the Great War, American Indians were experiencing a period of economic, political, geographical, and spiritual devastation. One would think they had nothing left to give, especially to a government that neither claimed them as citizens nor respected their sovereignty. When Congress declared war in the spring of 1917, however, as much as 30 percent -- or about 12,000 -- of American Indian males enlisted.



Native American members of Company E, 142nd Infantry, 36th Division. (Courtesy National WWI Museum and Memorial)

While Indigenous peoples have served in every United States conflict dating back to the American Revolution, World War I marked the first time that American Indians served as regular combat troops. American Indians served in every major engagement involving the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) and several won medals for their courageous acts. In response to popular stereotypes of Natives as preternaturally skilled fighters, American Indian soldiers often received dangerous assignments as scouts, snipers, and messengers. Consequently, they would suffer a higher casualty rate than other AEF fighters.

Though dangerous, the opportunities within World War I were not lost on many young American Indians. Many saw the war as a chance to learn new skills, find economic mobility, escape the confines of reservations, see the world, and hopefully gain the rights of full U. S. citizenship. It was also an opportunity to step into a decades-long dormant role, to become a warrior again. Warrior societies, also known as military or martial societies in some anthropological writings, were one of a larger group of social and political societies in American Indian cultures. A form of social and labor organization, almost every American Indian nation had forms of men's and women's societies. Communities created these groups to accomplish united purposes of work, governing, or other societal needs. During a time of peace, men's warrior societies could act as police forces during ceremonies or large meetings, hunts, and while communities were moving. When Native nations participated in raids and internal warfare, these societies provided the participants in battle. The martial emphasis of these groups increased during the nineteenth century as expanding United States settlement displaced tribes and intensified warfare on the Plains.

Every martial society had its own ceremonies, rituals and dances. These ceremonies reaffirmed tribal organization and virtues, as well as honored and purified veterans of combat. Stepping into the role of a warrior was not a comfortable process, and the associated rituals and ceremonies of a warrior society assisted with managing the uncomfortable

transitions between a state of peace and a state of war. Ceremonies prepared soldiers mentally and spiritually to go into battle, provided healing and reintegration for veterans, and respectfully laid to rest those who died. Once soldiers revived active memberships in societies, Native American communities had important spiritual advocates in their warriors. With the Great War, the enlistment of American Indian men heralded a necessary renewal of many aspects of warrior societies, including ceremonies previously suppressed by the United States reservation policies. This resurgence of spiritual practices allowed young people to participate in aspects of their cultures that they may have only heard of from elders. For example, in December of 1917, at Standing Rock Sioux in South Dakota, the community honored seven young inductees into their warrior society — a practice that had been previously suspended due to BIA policies.



154681 Pvt. John Elk, Company D, 139th Infantry, 35th Division. Bismarck, N.D. Full blooded Sioux Indian. Commercy, Meuse, France. Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1919.

Private John Elk (Standing Rock Sioux), Company D, 139th Infantry, 35th Division. (Courtesy National WWI Museum and Memorial)

As The American Indian Magazines Spring 1918 issue described: “A procession formed at the day school headed, according to ancient custom, by a young woman of unimpeachable reputation, upon whom was bestowed the singular honor of carrying the colors ... Behind her came the volunteers, Eugene Younghawk, James Weaselbear, Samuel Bravecrow, James Villagecenter, John Ironthunder, Joseph Leaf and Thomas Pheasant. ... Next members of the Tokala lodge, surviving members of the White Horse Brigade, who always appeared in conflict on white steeds, members of three religious denominations, their societies, etc. and lastly, warriors of ye olde tyme.”

These ceremonies marked the time when soldiers became warriors, leaving a life of peace for a life of war. Traditional songs, dances, and rituals prepared soldiers for this massive psychological and spiritual transition.

As part of the preparation, many warrior society songs sung to prepare members for battle were rewritten, replacing the names of former enemies with the new Central Power enemies of WWI. For example, a Lakota warrior society song was rewritten to feature Lakota warriors defeating the Germans in battle.

*“The Germans retreat crying,  
The Lakota boys are charging from afar.  
The Germans retreat crying.  
Lakota boy, the German,  
Whose many lands you have taken,  
Are crying like women there.  
German, I have been watching your tracks  
Worthless one! I would have followed you  
Where you would have gone.”*

This type of song would serve to facilitate transition for a warrior, promoting confidence and mitigating the intense transition from a life of peace to one of chaos. When returning from the war, Native Doughboys would receive another celebration — one of welcome and homecoming. Traditional dances, feasts, and giveaways became popular, especially as many American Indian veterans stepped into their



new status and responsibility as warriors in their communities. Many veterans, more comfortable with navigating bureaucracies and channels of authority after serving in the U.S. military, became tribal leaders who petitioned against on-reservation restrictions, demanding the right to hold ceremonial dances and perform expressions of traditional spirituality. Just as previous ceremonies before a soldier's departure helped him prepare psychologically and spiritually for the altered state of war, homecoming celebrations purified and reintegrated veterans transitioning from war back into community and civilian life. They also served as a public acknowledgement of the warrior's sacrifice and honored status in his community.



Private 1st class Pontiac Williams (Ottawa), Company K, 125th Infantry, recipient of Distinguished Service Cross.

Once the community homecoming ended, families and individual veterans could practice more personal forms of ritual. Many American Indian

communities understand war as a negative force that throws nature and communities out of balance. To restore equilibrium to the world and heal the individual, a person may go through a sacred ritual. For example, in the Diné practice, the Enemy Way ceremony heals and restores balance. The ceremony, with its emphasis on preparation, family and community support, harmony within the universe, and prayers, helps to counter the negative effects of chaos, death, and destruction experienced by a soldier during periods of war. These deeply personal ceremonies allow soldiers suffering from psychological, physical, and spiritual trauma a path to reintegration to their communities.



Poster from welcome home celebration, Crow Nation, 1919. (Courtesy National WWI Museum and Memorial)

Ritual processes help to manage the physical and psychological damage caused by combat. For families and communities, ceremonies express support, recognize sacrifice, and encourage the warrior's

return to everyday life. Both customary practice and contemporary research suggest a correlation between resolving PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and participation in ceremonies connected with warfare and healing. Indigenous belief systems actively supported and healed veterans coming home — providing an invaluable resource for both soldiers and their communities.

## **Pan-Indianism and New Spiritual Movements**

For many Native Doughboys, service during WW I clarified priorities, provided a sense of purpose, and formed leadership skills. Overseas and away from reservations and punitive policies, American Indian soldiers experienced a relative freedom of expression. Out of these experiences would come warriors less intimidated by the BIA, leading to outspoken participation in debates on citizenship, sovereignty, and reservation restrictions. Military service brought together Native American men from different Native nations and geographical regions across the United States, creating a patriotic American Indian identity, and establishing personal friendships across Native Nations. Reaching across tribal and national lines, veterans of the Great War established foundations for spiritual-social pan-Indian movements that would reverberate through the twentieth century.

The Native American Church (NAC) is a prime example of such a Pan-Indian movement. The NAC is a religion of diffusion, accommodating a wide range of American Indian traditions and practices. The Native American Church uses elements of indigenous spirituality, Christian worship, and American iconography, resulting in a religion specifically rooted in the geographic and psychological space of America. Often controversial because of its ritual use of peyote, a psychoactive cactus, the Native American Church became a rallying point for American Indian veterans of WW I intent on fighting for their cultures and spiritual practices.

The Native American Church helped American Indian soldiers serving abroad to find community acceptance, and deeper connections to

spirituality. For practitioners, peyote was a means of communicating with the sacred. As Ray Blackbear (Kiowa) recalled, some Indian soldiers carried pouches of peyote for protection when they went to France: “... And in 1918 a similar thing occurred. ... The First World War. Which the members of this Native American Church went into the armed forces. They took it [peyote] with them. You seen some of those beaded pouches -- and they wore it. And these fellows went over there and came back. Never had a scratch.... They use it for protection. They’re protected by that peyote and spirit.”

While peyote is respected and understood as powerful, the tenets of the NAC go beyond consumption of the sacramental peyote and underscore ideas of “right living” by abstinence from alcohol, infidelity, and a deeper understanding or the struggle between and ultimate choice of good over evil. In an age of despair, uncertainty, and instability, the Native American Church provided hope and a guide for living for those struggling on reservations and American Indian soldiers fighting abroad. At home, many non-Indian and some Indian groups saw peyote use as harmful and sought legislation to prohibit the practices of the Native American Church. As a result, BIA officials shut down NAC ceremonies. Returning from overseas, Great War veterans from several tribes residing in Oklahoma formed an intertribal coalition to support and defend the practices of peyote religion. This intertribal coalition worked to establish the Native American Church as a recognized religion, seeking official legal protection for their religious practices. In 1918 their efforts were successful, and the NAC was officially incorporated as a recognized religion in Oklahoma. This would not alleviate all the negative associations held by many about -- nor legal attempts to prohibit - the practice of ritual peyote use. However, it was a major victory in the ability of American Indians to gain recognition of and legal protection for their own spiritual practices.

Another Pan-Indian movement that benefited from the innovation and support of Great War American Indian veterans is the inter-tribal powwow. These social, public gatherings inspire personal and cultural pride in being American Indian. The origins



of this hybrid tradition began in the twentieth century and can be traced to multiple effects of veterans returning from WW I: the resurgence of ceremonial dances, veteran leadership pushing back against BIA restrictions, a growth of friendships between tribal nations due to veterans' shared service experiences, and increased automobile use facilitating travel between reservations after the war. All these factors combined to form the first intertribal powwow, held at Dietrich Lake in Oklahoma in 1920. This event would give birth to the modern pan-Indian powwow celebration of homecoming, survival, patriotism, and Indianness that would flourish in the twentieth century.



Powwow at Blackfeet Indian reservation at Browning, Montana, 1925. (Courtesy LOC)

Inspired by their pride in American Indianness and service for the United States, veterans and communities established new patriotic rituals at powwows. The American flag, once seen as a symbol of destruction for American Indians' way of life, took an honored place at these gatherings. Veterans and community members composed Flag Songs to celebrate those who served and the flag under which they fought. Flag Songs were often inspired by feelings of patriotism shaped by experiences in WW I. Popular with Plains tribes, though also composed by tribes such as the Lumbee, Eastern Cherokee, Mohegan, and Pequot on the East Coast and Cochiti, Jemez, and Taos pueblos in the Southwest, flag songs share Indigenous stories about and admiration for the United States flag. Flag Songs, while differing by tribe, center on the symbol of the American flag and function as a tribal anthem. A Ho-Chuck Flag Song,

written by WW I veterans Andrew Blackhawk and Jim Carimon, sings of patriotism and passion.

*I love my flag,*

*So I went to the old world to fight the Germans,*

*If I had not loved the American Flag*

*I would not have come back,*

*But now we are still using it.*

Flag Songs are treated with reverence and honor, commanding the same respectful attitude and behavior given to the "Star Spangled Banner." Native communities incorporated Flag Songs into community celebrations, and they are still sung at the opening of ceremonies, public gatherings, and powwows, which often have a grand entry solely for veterans.

Veterans take a place of honor at powwows, and many of the dances performed are directly descended from the military societies of the Kiowa, Comanche, Plains Apache, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Pawnee, Osage, and Ponca. One of the most widespread of these ceremonies is the gourd-dance, which had its origins in a war society dance among the Kiowa people. It has become the preliminary ceremony to nearly every American Indian powwow in Oklahoma and throughout the Southwest, specifically celebrating veterans and recognizing their sacrifices for community and country. Another prominent powwow dance, the jingle dress dance, originated around the time of WW I, intentionally and spiritually created a space for healing and honor.

Like the world at large, the influenza pandemic swept through American Indian reservations during 1918. Returning from the Great War, American Indian veterans would often find home communities dealing with their own catastrophe of wide-spread death. Reports on reservations listed hundreds of Native deaths within a year, the rapid spread of the disease exacerbated by poor living conditions as well as a lack of medical care — many doctors and nurses from BIA-run Indian hospitals had to serve in the war, leaving many reservations critically underserved. The death and desperation brought on by the epidemic

would inspire a new spiritual tradition of healing for American Indian communities - the jingle dress dance - emerging first in Ojibwe communities in the United States and Canada and then spreading across Indian Country.

American Indian communities recognized the importance a contemporary dance for healing could have — both on those suffering from influenza and the unseen wounds some veterans carried from the war. The jingle dress dance phenomenon followed powwow routes, traveling from reservation to reservation as neighbors from separate nations met and held dances. The dance traveled first to the Ojibwe’s neighbors, the Lakota, and then on to American Indian communities across the United States. The dance became a pan-Indian phenomenon of healing and celebration of spiritual survival. It is now one of the most popular dances at powwows in the twenty-first century, with deep resonance for veterans.

American Indian veterans of WW I fought in a terrifying and chaotic war overseas, but unlike most of the U. S. citizen veteran counterparts, they returned to a home at war. American Indian veterans came home to communities still under oppressive U. S. reservation policies, fighting for the ability to practice their cultural and spiritual beliefs. But these veterans returned as warriors, with confidence and skills in leadership to serve their communities. Service in the Great War resurrected warriors — not the warriors of the imagination of the American popular culture, canvassing the plains on horseback, but warriors ready to fight for their people struggling for daily survival. Returning from duty, American Indian veterans lived out their warrior roles in creating new community contexts for traditional rituals and inspiring new expressions of American Indian spirituality.

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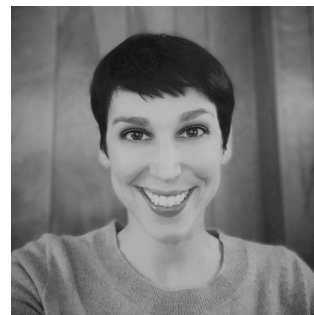
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Wounded Choctaw Indian from Oklahoma being cared for at Military Hospital #5, Auteuil, France, September, 1918. (Courtesy LOC)

## About the Author



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## WOMEN IN THE FRONTLINES

# DR. HECTOR MUNRO'S FLYING AMBULANCE CORPS IN FLANDERS (1914-1918)

## PART 1: A TRY OUT

PATRICK VANLEENE

In the early morning of 4 August 1914 two German armies violated the neutrality of the small kingdom of Belgium. They were heading for Paris, France. That same day Britain declared war on Germany. In an effort to defend Belgium and the principle of neutrality, the British government sent its Expeditionary Force to France.

The propaganda machine came into action

when fifty-three literary authors signed a manifesto that appeared in *The Times* stressing the fact that Britain's credibility was now at stake, the more so since Germany had condescendingly dismissed the Treaty of London (1839), the official recognition of Belgium's neutrality, as a scrap of paper.

Because of that Treaty the Belgian army was not prepared for war, badly equipped and trained and

undermanned one to ten compared to the German Imperial Army. The newly built double line of fortresses defending Antwerp was still lacking its big guns, which were paid for but not delivered by their German manufacturer.



Retreating Belgian soldiers in 1914.

All levels of British society hastily prepared for war, driven by a taste for adventure, ardent patriotism and – after the first press releases of burning towns and atrocities against Belgian civilians – moral outrage. Only a small number of pacifists openly expressed their conviction while conscientious objectors spontaneously signed up with medical services, such as the war painter Christopher R.W. Nevinson who drove for a Dunkirk based Friends (Quaker) Ambulance Unit.

Unlike Germany and France, the latter ready to retaliate since the French-Prussian war of 1870/1, the United Kingdom had no conscription but counted on the strength of its small but very professional army and its navy, which had proven quite effective, to guard its overseas empire. The call to arms from Lord Kitchener, the war minister, was a huge success: tens of thousands of young men hastened to enroll in a volunteer army that after training was meant to complement the British Expeditionary Force. On 23 August 1914 the BEF was near the Belgian town of Mons.

Upper class car owners, such as the 28,000 members of the Royal Automobile Club, offered their (surplus) cars to the War Office, sometimes

with themselves at the wheel. The British Motor Service Volunteer Corps appeared in Flanders with automobiles turned into staff cars and makeshift ambulances. Among them were Americans, like Frederic A. Coleman who wrote two memoirs about his mobile adventures chauffeuring British cavalry staff officers in France and Belgium. Also, Mrs. Gladys Winterbottom, a Bostonian who worked as an ambulance driver, used her touring-car for the British Field Hospital for Belgium. It was a Minerva (a Belgian brand), of a similar type as the armored cars of the Belgian army which were developed from civilian Minervas.



Mrs. Winterbottom, née Gladys H. Appleton, in her Minerva driving to one of the outer Antwerp forts to retrieve wounded, October 1914.  
(Photo source: *Le Miroir*, 1914)

The suffrage movement helped manage the war effort as the Women's Emergency Corps, supplying the War Office with female dispatchers. Hospitals organized crash courses in nursing for unmarried young women (and men). A Scottish Women's Hospital Unit was established in Antwerp and a Women's Hospital Corps near Paris. Other female units left for Serbia. All because the War Office and the British Red Cross hesitated to send women into battle zones.

## Big Plans But Nothing Else

This was the context of Dr. Hector Munro's Flying Ambulance Corps. The 'flying' meant that its motor ambulances were supposed to venture onto



the very battlefields to search for wounded. Motor ambulances were a luxury in the French and Belgian armies. They relied on horse ambulances with a red cross painted on the hood stationed three miles behind the front lines.

Dr. Hector Munro was a trained medical doctor turned psychiatrist who had founded a Medico-Psychological Clinic on Brunswick Square, London, in 1913. His main fan was the successful Victorian writer, May Sinclair (born 1863). Munro convinced a hesitant Sinclair to join his corps of five men and five women, all volunteers, all unpaid. He reckoned that Sinclair would be a good fund raiser since she had sponsored his clinic with an impressive £500, and she had press connections. He himself ventured into Belgium to scout the area but got no further than the Channel port of Ostend, which was packed with refugees. His report was sufficient for the Belgian Red Cross to accept Munro's offer and lend him two motor ambulances with drivers.



**May Sinclair**

By the end of August, Germany occupied half of Belgium, had annihilated an entire French army and chased the British from Mons. The Belgian Red Cross and the medical services of the army had lost most of their medical equipment to the invaders.

Hector Munro, in the meantime, had recruited two fellow doctors, Leslie M. Reece and Eric H. Shaw, two stretcher bearers, C.S. Wakefield and chaplain S.F. Streatfield, and advertised for "adventurous young women to equip an ambulance unit for service in Belgium". Some 200 applicants turned up. But he recruited them in another way: he spotted the teenager, Mairi Chisholm (born 1896), daughter of the chief of the Scottish Chisholm Clan, working as a motor dispatch rider in London. Mairi recalled in a BBC-interview: '[He] was deeply impressed with my ability to ride through the traffic. He traced me to the Women's Emergency Corps and said: "Would you like to go out to Flanders?" and I said: "Yes, I'd love to".' She noted in her blue war diary that she insisted on having her friend and fellow biker Elizabeth Knocker enrolled as well. Elsie Knocker (born 1884) was a trained nurse and described herself as a widow with a small son, then a more acceptable soubriquet for a single woman than the divorcée she was. As a teenager she had spent some time in a Swiss school where she acquired some notions of French and German. The driving skills of many British upper-and middleclass women like Mairi and Elsie freed them from social restraints and the war now unexpectedly offered them a way out.



Elsie Knocker (right) and Mairi Chisolm (left) at the front. (Courtesy LOC)

The piano teacher Helen Gleason née Hayes, born 1885, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was the wife of a reputed American journalist, Arthur H. Gleason, who was already in Flanders to report on the war.



Helen Hays Gleason

From the very beginning the American press had dispatched war correspondents to Flanders: Arthur Gleason for *The New York Tribune*, the freelancer Arno Dosch-Fleuret for *The New York World* and Ben Allan for Associated Press. Arthur Gleason was surely the main reason to enlist Helen Gleason. Hector Munro pioneered the use of embedded journalists. Helen Gleason witnessed

the French eagerness to confront the Germans in Paris but joined the exodus of American ex-pats and hurried to London when the German army was closing in and Paris was bombed by a plane at the end of August, and again in early September 1914.

Lady Dorothea Feilding (born 1889) was a scion of one of England's oldest noble families. She was a skilled car driver — though the family had a trusted chauffeur — and her studies in a convent school in Paris ensured her fluency in French. It was her uncle Francis Henry Everard Joseph Feilding, aka uncle Everard, a London-based barrister and naval intelligence officer who suggested Munro's ambulance corps to his niece as a quick way to get to the war. Dorothea's mother, the Countess Denbigh, in turn, consulted the Belgian Legation in London about the situation in Belgium. On 21 September the answer sounded anything but reassuring: "The St. John's ambulance units stationed in Brussels and Mons have all fallen into German hands, but they were allowed to continue to carry out their work under relatively safe conditions."

The Belgian representative was clearly thinking of Miss Violetta Thurstan who was in charge of a contingent of British nurses in Brussels for the St. John's Ambulance Association. After the fall of the city,

she was ordered by the German authorities to take two nurses and go work at a hospital near Mons, now under German command, leaving the other nurses scattered over several Brussels hospitals. Soon the Germans decided that all English nurses had to leave Belgium. They were put on a train to Copenhagen, Denmark, from where they returned to Britain. Miss Thurstan, however, travelled directly to Russia to work for the Russian Red Cross. She later returned to Belgium as a matron in L'Océan, a large Belgian Red Cross Hospital in La Panne [De Panne], next to the war residence of the Belgian King and Queen.



During the war the beach-side Grand Hôtel de L'Océan in La Panne was transformed into Océan Ambulance, a military hospital. (Courtesy LOC)

The Belgian representative wisely kept quiet about nurse Mabel St. Clair Stobart, also leading a St. John's Ambulance Unit. She was apprehended as a spy when leaving Brussels after the city was taken by the Germans and was threatened to be shot but released and sent back to Britain via The Netherlands. But Mabel Stobart stubbornly returned to Belgium and went straight to Antwerp to establish a hospital with an all-female staff. German hostility toward British nurses was growing and would culminate in the execution of nurse Edith Cavell in Brussels in October 1915, triggering international outrage.

June Moore, the youngest daughter of Dorothea Feilding, kept a copy of her mother's unpublished



diary covering the first week (20 to 29 September 1914) of the ambulance corps in Belgium. It gives us a rare insight into the mixed feelings of some of Munro's volunteers once they had embarked on their adventurous, yet dangerous journey. Even Dr. Hector Munro seemed at a loss when he started to realize the immensity of his own plans.

Lady Dorothe Feilding in her diary:

*I went down to see Munro with Mother as we were to leave next day. He was sitting on the floor, playing with a shiny new canvas green tent of complicated design and no kind of use, and surrounded by maps. Between the intervals of showing us how it buttoned up and where Ghent [Gent] was, we gradually discovered the expedition was a motley gathering, vague in number from 1 to 15 of people least calculated to be of any use at the front. We had two cars – which no one had seen and we hoped were at Ostend – and our destination was Ghent (...) – funds we had not. We were to bring passports and meet at Victoria [Station] next day. May Sinclair was the only other person there and told me with ardor not to mind Munro's vagueness as he was a Celtic poet and a dreamer and had magnificent ideals. I didn't see dreams were to finance the Corps, or ideals get us to Ghent, but I left it at that and hoped for the best. (...) By the way, Munro inoculated me, - he held the syringe upside down, he dropped the serum, he wondered how much he ought to put in and if he'd got the right lot and he forgot to boil any of the instruments."*

Dorothe here shows off her newly acquired medical knowledge from the two weeks' crash course at the Hospital of St.-Cross in Rugby.

## **Eighteen Days to Start With**

25 September 1914.

*"I arrived at Victoria [Station] with too much luggage, the wrong kind of clothes (...) and an awful feeling of homesickness. (...) The most*

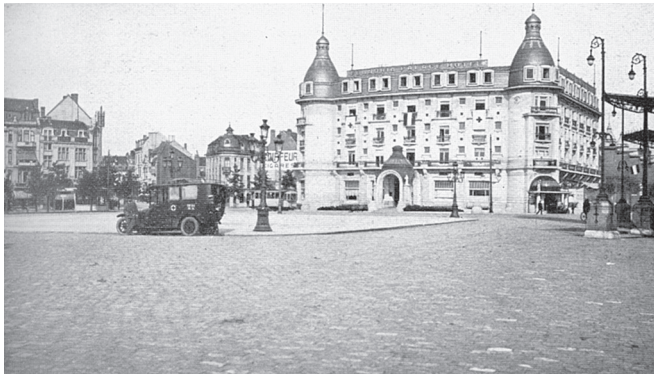
*weird crowd collected at that train and I kept wondering which of them belonged to our party and hoping the ladies in the huge coats and arctic hats at the bookstall, and the cadaverous gent in a pepper and salt suit, the fat man in khaki and the little American tourist lady with a twang, didn't belong to us – but they did!"*  
(Feilding, Diary)

May Sinclair elaborates on the appearance of the amateur ambulance corps in her *Journal of Impressions in Belgium* "written out from my Day-Book". She uses nicknames for everybody involved – was it the censor in her or the novelist? – but the main characters remain recognizable:

*We look more like a party of refugees, or the cast of a Barrie play [J. M. Barrie, the creator of Peter Pan] than a field ambulance corps. The Chaplain alone wears complete khaki, (...) the Commandant [Munro] (...) wears a Norfolk jacket and one of his hats. The stretcher bearer in plain clothes, with a satchel slung over his shoulders, has the air of an inquiring tourist. Mrs. Torrence and Janet McNeil [Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm] in short khaki tunics, khaki puttees and round Jaeger caps, and very thick coats over all, strapped in with leather belts, look as if they were about to sail on an Arctic expedition; I was told to wear dark blue serge (...) Ursula Dearmer and Mrs. Lambert [Dorothe Feilding and Helen Gleason] are in normal clothes."*

The train they boarded at Victoria brought them to the Channel ferry in Folkstone. A Dr. Donald Renton from Glasgow was to join them later. They arrived in the Belgian port of Ostend by the evening and found lodgings close to the docks in Hotel Terminal, which was part of the train station. The latter fact explains why it had been targeted the day before by a Zeppelin dropping five bombs, but without much harm.

The next morning, while waiting for their ambulances and a light truck to arrive by ferry, they were greeted by a Red Cross representative from Ghent. Feilding describes the vehicles: two vast



The posh Flandria Palace Hotel in Ghent turned into a military hospital. Photograph taken from outside the main train station.

ambulances, an old Daimler and a slow Fiat on hard tires with the drivers, [Eustace Gurney and Jack Secker] and a light Ford truck [with Cecil Cooper]. First, they had some difficulty getting fuel since all petrol was requisitioned by the army but in the afternoon, they managed to get to Ghent.

Their destination was the brand new Flandria Palace Hotel - now turned into a military hospital - positioned at right angles with the Ghent train station. Munro's ambulance corps was cheered at and received with tea and cake because people thought they were the vanguard of the British Army. The female members were lodged on the third floor of the posh hotel in a suite of rooms with their own bathrooms and they were assigned hospital orderlies to serve them. The men found lodgings in town. After the warm welcome and much to their surprise, the British guests were to sit and wait. They were unaware of the realities of the war at that stage: the 4<sup>th</sup> German Army Corps had halted its advance after taking Brussels, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> German Army Corps was heading towards the Antwerp fortresses behind the walls of which the Belgian army had retreated. Ghent was safe for the time being.

Feilding again:

*Oh! The awful inactivity! of those first days in Ghent. And there was (...) nothing to do in the hospital and very little to do on the cars and there was no need for 14 people per car (...) Mairi and I sat forlornly in the square*

*[opposite the station] wishing we were dead – wishing we had the moral courage to go home and own the failure – wishing something would happen and just aching for work. ... But, anyway, I was a help by my French ... and I had to run round, get passports, find openings to work, try to get petrol, badger the Colonels and the Belgian army in general for permission to go where cars never dreamt of going – that is, where there were wounded, find Munro, lose him again and find him again, tell him he was an ass and why couldn't he keep appointments with officials ... . All these ways I could help and did help – and ended by getting the show a lot nearer things than they would otherwise."*

The female members of the corps, dressed in Belgian Red Cross uniforms, engaged in distributing slices of bread and coffee among several thousands of refugees gathered in an immense hall of the Casino. The women worked long shifts at meal times only to be summoned back by the hospital authorities for fear they might bring typhoid fever or suchlike into the military hospital.

With two ambulances, the Daimler was known as Car I, the Fiat as Car II, the company's members went their separate ways. When on Monday 28 September Dorothe Feilding, Dr. Munro and Dr. Shaw ventured towards the town of Alost [Aalst], situated halfway between Ghent and Brussels, the realities of war kicked in:

*We went a snail's pace all the way for that road was black with refugees – walking, running, dragging themselves along – old people and babies, carts and wagons piled with furniture and people and everyone with bundles containing their most treasured belongings." Alost was deserted except for dismounted Belgian cavalry, acting as the rear-guard, manning barricades. The Germans started the attack by tentatively putting artillery shells into the town.*

*Dorothe: "These were the first shells I ever heard and one wasn't a scrap alarmed for the*



*simple reason one didn't realize then what they were! A shrapnel burst overhead very high over the little place where we were standing in a portico. One bit fell a few yards from me and one of the soldiers picked it up, hung it on a string and put it round my neck as a souvenir ..."*

A Central News Agency press photograph that appeared in a Spanish newspaper shows Feilding, flanked by Shaw and Munro, proudly wearing the bottom of a small caliber shell case around her neck and leaving a convent school turned into a hospital.

In October 1914 the ambulance corps was finally tasked to do what it was there for: transport

wounded soldiers – Belgians, English Royal Marines, French marine fusiliers and Germans. The bulk of the casualties came to Ghent by trains from a besieged Antwerp. On 5 October Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm spent all afternoon and night till 4 a.m. removing wounded from trains to the Flandria Palace Hotel. After the fall of Antwerp, Munro's (by now) six vehicles, drove left and right to the various battle fields along the river Schelde to search for the wounded among the dead and dying. Daring deeds these were indeed, if not downright dangerous.

The night of 6 October the Belgian army began to retreat from Antwerp to avoid being trapped. German forces had managed to cross the river Schelde at four points hoping to cut off the defenders



The photograph shows Dr. Eric H. Shaw (left), Dorothe Feilding and Dr. Hector Munro (right, wearing trench coat). Feilding wears the bottom (brass disk) of a small caliber shell case around her neck.

of Antwerp from the rest of the army. In Termonde (Dendermonde) the Germans organized a large scale burning of homes and executed hundreds of civilians while using others as a living shield when attacking Belgian defensive positions. The Belgian rear-guard at the river banks retreated, not checking if all their fallen comrades were dead or wounded. An ambulance crew with Feilding and a Belgian nurse found an unconscious private with a severed foot and a major with a shattered knee sheltering in a dug-out. They had them transported to Ghent and Dorothe and the nurse stayed behind in the village for the night, only to wake up to the exodus of the villagers as German infantry was about to occupy the village. When an ambulance with Munro at the wheel came to their rescue, a soldier pointed to a little white cottage that had more wounded in it. They immediately collected them too. In Ghent they met up with the Gleasons, who with their own motorcar had tried to save Dorothe and the Belgian woman, but ended up in the village occupied by the Germans instead. The Americans were apprehended but after showing their passports, let go unharmed.

By 9 October the Military Hospital in the Flandria Palace Hotel was filled to the rafters with the wounded and the female members of Munro's Corps had to find lodgings elsewhere in town. The three British surgeons, who were about to return home for lack of work, had suddenly all the right reasons to stay and work long hours in the operating theatre.

The day before, two regiments of French marine fusiliers had arrived in Ghent. They took up positions some nine miles from Ghent city center behind a railway embankment. Supported by Belgian batteries they beat back the German attackers in the fields facing them. An operation which allowed the retreating Belgian army to evacuate its wounded and medical staff. British ambulance units followed suit with their motor ambulances, horse drawn wagons and double-decker buses filled with transportable British wounded.

In the days following the French success, Munro's ambulances ventured into the fields and farms from where the Germans had been chased, leaving their dead and wounded behind. Feilding reports:

*In many of the courtyards and houses the dead were lying as they had fallen. It was gruesome and awful. There were no wounded that we could find left there, though some not very bad must have been hiding still in the farm buildings. ... There were quantities of starving animals in the stalls that can't have been fed for days, and Gurney and I went and turned them loose. Colts, calves, cows, pigs, a sheep dog that tried to eat us, and even rabbits. We loosened them in the fields to look after themselves, all the time wondering if there were any Germans in those dark corners, waiting to have a shot – but nothing happened.*

Dr. Renton, Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm, for their part, did find military in need of them when they went out to search for wounded Germans in a turnip field. Chisholm writes home:

*Here we brought in two wounded Germans and one with a badly shattered leg. I have never seen so much blood in my life, his boot was full of it and there were puddles all around. We fixed him up, also the other two and sent them back to Ghent ..., then ploughed our way into the turnip field. As long as I live, I will never forget a detail of that field. Lying in and out among the turnips were dead and dying Germans – all looked like figures out in wax – their fingers sticking out straight and rigid. It was a sight. We started immediately to attend to the wounded. There were two men still alive in the middle of the field.*

Dr. Renton and Elsie had just started to dress the first wounded when they were shot at and all three had to bolt. The women decided to return at dusk, without Renton who had left with an ambulance full of wounded. As it was getting dark, Munro thought it was too dangerous and the other driver flatly refused to come to the rescue of Germans. But a Belgian military ambulance nearby was willing to take them. Elsie Knocker got in beside the Belgian driver, Mairi Chisholm jumped on one step and May Sinclair on the other. Munro forbade her to go and Elsie Knocker



added insult to injury by hoisting her off the step adding “You can’t come. You’ll take up the place of a wounded man.” Then the ambulance left for the turnip field, leaving Hector Munro, Helen Gleason, an offended May Sinclair, Dorothie Feilding and the chaplain silently waiting in their vehicles. Mairi again: “We went down into the field. It was a weird sight: one could see lying about in the haze these Germans, all huddled up in strange positions. The man we had started on in the morning was stone dead, but the other man’s knee was still moving.” Half an hour later the Belgian ambulance left with that German casualty.

Two nights later, after midnight, the fourteen members of Munro’s Ambulance Corps left Ghent for Ostend in four ambulances with a Belgian soldier as a guide. The staff got rooms in hotels on the sea-front. Pending being ferried to England, the hundreds of wounded were brought to the Casino which had been turned into a makeshift hospital by English and American women. Munro talked Sinclair into going back to London under the pretext of getting funding for the corps and at the same time he shamelessly took another novelist, Miss Sarah Macnaughtan (born 1864) on board to replace Sinclair as secretary and press liaison. She had served in Mabel Stobart’s field hospital which was to sail back to Britain, but Macnaughtan opted to stay. She quickly realized that Munro’s corps was run by its women: “It is all so quaint. The girls rule the company, carry maps and find roads, see about provisions and carry wounded.”

The next day Munro’s corps continued its retreat to Dunkirk, a port just across the Franco-Belgian border, overtaking units of a battered and decimated army retreating to its last stand behind the river Yser, that runs from Nieuport [Nieuwpoort] on the coast to Ypres [Ieper]. By sheer luck May Sinclair managed to get a passage for Dover on the “Victoria”, not aware that she would never be allowed back to the war and to the ambulance corps.

**To be continued: Issue # 18,  
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## About the Author



Patrick Vanleene, independent researcher, worked as translator and WWI expert for the Living Stone Film Company. He was involved as historical advisor and location hunter in Belgium for the BBC-HBO -Living Stone production of *Parade’s End*, Tom Stoppard’s adaptation of the Ford Maddox Ford novel. He also acted as advisor to two BBC documentaries on the role of the Munro corps women on the frontline in Flanders.

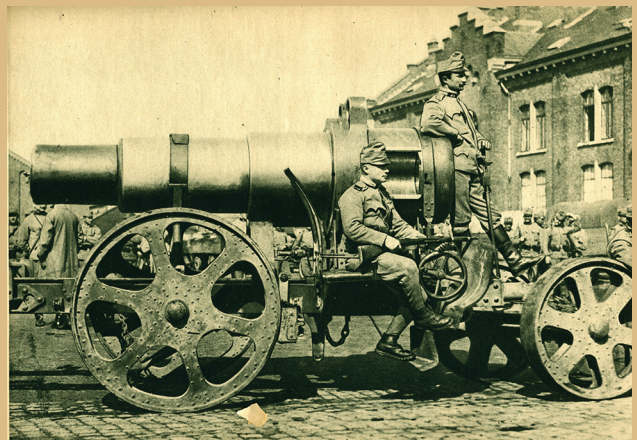
From 2014 to 2020 he was the event manager and the exhibition designer for the Great War Commemoration in Nieuwpoort’s newly built Visitors’ Center. Vanleene published several books and articles on aspects of the Great War in Flanders including *Fearless* (2015) on the involvement of Dorothie Feilding as an ambulance driver. Vanleene was born and temporarily worked in Veurne (Furnes), one of the locations of Dr Munro’s Ambulance Corps in Flanders. This gives him a special insight into the circumstances of the work of Munro and his team.

## An American Woman in Liège

Glenna Bigelow Tyler was probably the first American woman to see the war. A graduate (1901) of the nursing school at Presbyterian Hospital in New York, she was residing near Liège in August 1914. She was a guest, or employed as a nurse, in the Château Nagelmackers in the village of Angleur, a commune near Liège within the ring of Liège's forts. The battle for the forts began August 4 and would go on for 12 days, with the sounds of heavy artillery a constant in Angleur. She was charged with the care of Monsieur Jules Nagelmackers, president of *Compagnie internationale des Wagons-lits*, a company that would include the famous Orient-Express. He died August 14 from the stresses of "battle noise" according to the New York Times (August 15, 1914). She published her experiences in a memoir, *Liège on the Line of March* (Glenna Lindsley Bigelow, 1918).



Because of the Nagelmackers' German connections, the château was protected and served as a retreat for senior German officers. Glenna describes the irony of nursing Belgian wounded in a nearby convent during the day and dining in the evening with German officers. She eventually made her way to Holland (November 7, 1914) and then to England; she crossed the channel to France where she served as nurse throughout the war.



"Austrian artillery was passing today with their great cannon drawn by automobiles. The wheels of the gun carriages are enormous and the cannon are the biggest things we have yet seen." Glenna probably saw a Skoda 30.5 cm mortar on the move.





## WORLD WAR ONE'S IMPACT ON AMERICAN SPORTS

PETER C. STEWART

### Baseball

With the U.S. declaration of war on April 6, 1917, many predicted the immediate demise of organized sports. However, baseball major league attendance ran close to normal as all sixteen clubs survived. Only a few lower-level leagues and clubs suspended play. Because construction of military training camps took months, the season ended before full mobilization. Catcher Hank Gowdy (Boston Braves) proved an exception by volunteering for army service during the season. Just after the season's end, Braves' Walter James Vincent "Rabbit" Maranville joined at least five Boston Red Sox at the Boston Navy

Yard. In 1918, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels would not let Jack Barry play for the Sox when he was on furlough. Most of the Navy Yard team went to sea.

Withdrawal of Russian Bolsheviks from the war in the ensuing winter let Germany bring thousands of troops to their Western Front in the spring of 1918. Responding to this development and concerned that the war might continue into 1919, the United States lowered the draft age to 18 from 21 and conducted another lottery to bring the number in the army and marines to about 4,000,000, half to be trained in 1918. Although all major league clubs carried on (the season shortened by a month), only one minor league (the International) survived. Red Sox owner Harry Frazee



Sergeant Hank Gowdy, catcher for the Boston Braves, received much praise when he volunteered for the U. S. Army in 1917. (Courtesy LOC)

restocked with “Mack Men” (Philadelphia A’s players, under owner/manager Connie Mack) and beat the Chicago Cubs in the World Series.

At the time of the war declaration, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and the University of Virginia thought playing baseball that spring would be an impossibility with as many as 50,000 students volunteering for service, varsity athletics supplying a disproportionate share of that number. However, several military leaders, including General Leonard Wood, who threw out the first ball for the New York Yankee home opener, thought athletic competition would play a major role in preparing for war. So, although colleges reduced games, only a few canceled the entire schedule. Even



General Leonard Wood at the Yankee game opener, April 11, 1917. Yankee manager Bill Donovan stands to the right. (Courtesy LOC)

though about half the lettermen went into the service or graduated in 1917, the next season brought nearly the same number of games.

In the summer of 1917, the national game showed up in forts and on naval ships and other installations. Naval Reservists, from prestigious universities played at Newport, Rhode Island. In Los Angeles, the Coastal Naval Reserves overcame “Tar Babies” from Fort MacArthur in August. Across the Atlantic in July 1917, crews from destroyers entertained American and British sailors with baseball games.

The next summer brought thousands of games, many covered in newspapers, including special editions published in cities near army camps. By that time major and minor leaguers (roughly 800 out of 2,000), along with many semi-pros and collegians, were in all branches of the service. Thousands of amateurs joined military clubs. Some thought up to a million men would play. While that was an exaggeration, about 150,000 played regularly, with about half that number doing so in Europe.

Camp Gordon near Atlanta, Georgia, had a club that edged the Atlanta Crackers. A championship black club scheduled a game against the best civilian counterpart from Atlanta (the Cubs). Camps Sevier and Jessup, along with Fort McPherson (the last two in downtown Atlanta) competed. When Major Albert von Kolnitz’s average fell to .214 for Camp Gordon’s best nine, a Cleveland shortstop replaced him. In July 1918, twenty-eight Southern camps had 10,623 contests.

At Camp Cody New Mexico, machine gunners, winners of nine straight in the fall of 1917, amassed fifty more the next spring, before the crack 34th Division nine stopped them. At Fort Bliss, in 1918, the top white team took on the 24th Infantry (African-American) led by Clarence Ross, who also won boxing matches. They split three weekend series, then at Fort Bliss went 12 innings tied, 7-7, when the 24th had to take the train to Columbus, Ohio. Camp Dick, near Dallas, Texas, captured the six-team Inter-Aviation League title, while Kelly Field (San Antonio, Texas) won 42 out of 50 but lost to 7th Division engineers stationed near Corpus Christi, Texas.

Naval recruiters in Omaha, Nebraska, lost to



All-Stars from the only amateur league left in the city, but, winning 19 of 21, they downed Camp Dodge on a Sunday, the losing team included major leaguers. With "Mack Man" Tom Sheehan pitching, Camp Dodge hospital won over Omaha civilians, but infantrymen from Fort Crook, mostly one-time Omaha amateurs, lost to the civilians, while raising \$1,500 for the hospital.

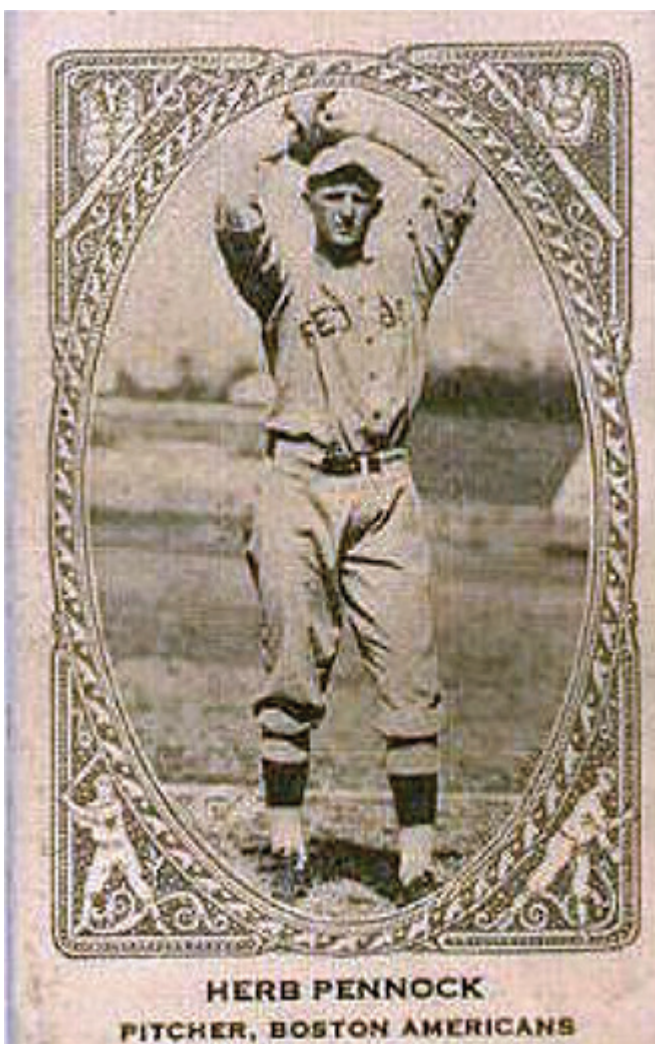
Late in the 1918 season, the military put together a league composed of Jefferson Barrack (St. Louis, Missouri) Great Lakes Naval Training along with camps Custer, Dodge, Funston, and Sherman. After Labor Day, flu canceled most games. Overall, that summer the Lakes went 30-8, with nine major leaguers aboard. Some rated Camp Grant, which defeated the Lakes, the top military nine.

At Camp Lewis in Washington State, one-time Chicago White Sox, now army Captain Jim Scott, supervised athletics on more than two dozen diamonds, where about thirty pros played. In California, San Diego Naval Training ran a 78 - 10 record, shutting out Camp Kearny twice. A nine from Mare Island Naval Training, managed by Duffy Lewis, Red Sox left fielder, lost at least five games to the Marines of Mare Island, even though the losers had four major leaguers.

The summer of 1918 brought about so many games in Europe one might think no one could be fighting Germans. The 840th Aero downed another squadron in England but also lost to a third American squadron. In France, the depot from the 840th with an electrician pitching, edged infantry from the 26th Division. but met defeat at the hands of artillerymen and engineers, the latter led by Detroit Tiger Frank Walker. Combat engineers of the 26th Division got in a couple of games. Gas and flame personnel played while receiving more training in their specialty. The main military newspaper in Paris mentioned results in May issues (many in the Paris League, followed intently by French fans) of a naval air station, dirigible station, medical repair shop, searchlight division, motor mechanics, marines, naval aviators, aviation technicians, the Red Cross, military police, ordnance, base censors, field artillery, telephone battalion, chief quartermasters, camouflage engineers, grenade throwers, and depth bomb shooters. The London

League featured a base section and a naval nine, raising money for British prisoner of war funds. An Army and Navy League in France had 12 regular nines, starting out on a Sunday. June brought a base hospital and field clerks. Several army divisions had leagues, including the 85th, two artillery nines tying for the lead. They played every afternoon for three or four hours.

On 4 July 1918, lefty Herb Pennock (Red Sox) struck out fourteen, his Naval nine edging Army dental surgeon and one time Tiger Captain Ed Lafitte. As many as 70,000 watched, including Winston Churchill and King George and a few more in a dirigible hovering over the field.



The draft sent Philadelphia Phillies ace Grover Alexander ("Old Pete") into the service. The press thought he would be assigned to office duties for the 342nd Field Artillery, primarily to play baseball, along with several other major leaguers and top-rated

collegians. But “Old Pete” did not join the regiment until the summer of 1918 and had little chance to play at Camp Funston. In France, the war kept the regiment occupied. So how and where they won an A.E.F. title remains an issue though they organized with several pros along the Rhine in early April 1919. Alexander pitched twice in the late winter (1919) as part of the Army of Occupation. By April 1919, he returned to the U.S., recording earned run averages close to his earlier standard (less than 2.00 in 1919 and 1920), despite having had an exploding shell ruin his hearing.

Starting around the Ides of March, March 15, 1919, a Riviera League featured the 11th Marines with catcher Nig Clarke, a former Cleveland Nap (renamed Cleveland Indians in 1915) who served at Quantico in 1918. As of the middle of June, a Major League for the A.E.F. planned play for the Army of Occupation. As late as the third week in June, a nine “composed entirely of colored players” tied for the title in Service and Supply.

## Football

Harvard University’s administrators wanted to cancel the fall 1917 football schedule, but Harvard and four other New England schools fielded “Informals.” The universities of Virginia and Georgia did not play in ’17 and ’18. The University of North Carolina dropped ’17 but played in ’18. Small colleges in Kansas increased the number of games in 1917. Neither Georgia Tech under John Heisman nor the University of Pittsburgh under Pop Warner, both of whom allowed freshman to play varsity, cut back. When Washington & Lee University lost by 60 to Tech in 1917, and its coach said Tech lost few to national service, the Atlanta press claimed only 6 of 22 from Tech’s ’16 varsity returned in ’17. Nationwide reduction in games in 1917 probably ran between 10 and 15%, while flu erased most of the planned games for October 1918. Colleges and universities admitted 150,000 in the Student Army (or Navy) Training Corps, offsetting the 100,000 or so collegians who had left campuses. Afternoons were devoted to drilling but an hour could have football practice. Most officials thought athletics created better future officers. Had flu not ruined October, the number of programs and games likely would have equaled 1917.



Hobart “Hobey” Baker, who starred in football and hockey at Princeton University and commanded a squadron in France, died when his plane crashed a few days after the Armistice. (Courtesy LOC)

In 1917, collegians played in Army camps, along with those who had left school in previous years. The government created 32 camps (16 for draftees and the same number for national guardsmen). It also had existing and several new forts, Army and Navy airfields, Marine posts like Quantico, and numerous naval installations. Few of these, along with battleships and cruisers, failed to field baseball nines and football elevens over the next two years. President of the Eastern Intercollegiate Basketball Association, Princeton professor Dr. Joseph Raycroft, supervised athletics at army camps while Walter Camp, who fathered American football, ran naval programs.

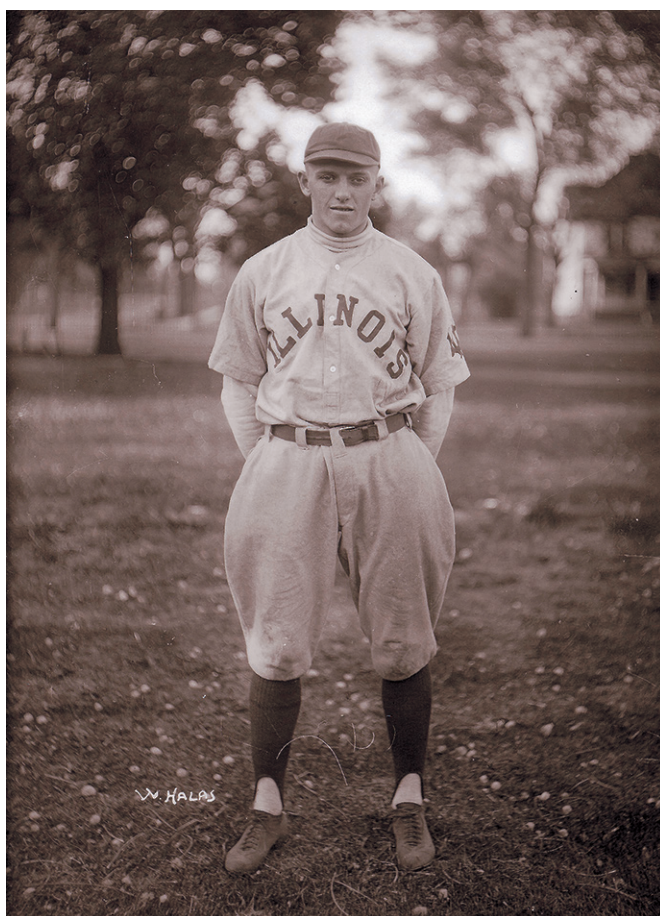
In 1917, Balboa Park won the Southwest service title. Mare Island Marines won the Rose Bowl on 1 January 1918 over Camp Lewis (Washington). The next fall, Great Lakes Naval Training included Paddy Driscoll, one-time Northwestern star, who



played for Hammond, Indiana, pros in 1917 and signed a contract with the White Sox but played baseball for the Lakes. George Halas left the University of Illinois' basketball team in the winter of '18. With Ensign Halas at end, the Blue Jackets, with Driscoll now at quarterback, edged the Naval Academy and routed six others to claim the Eastern naval title. They then went West to take on Mare Island Marines, which, coached by William Dietz, with seven of his Washington State collegians, overcame Aviators from Mather and Rockwell fields. The Lakes came through mountain passes filled with snow to win the Rose Bowl of 1 January 1919. Dietz, who lost his job with Washington

one over the University of Pittsburgh by a point. An administrator objected to the behavior of reservist Ray Chapman (in 1920 he became the only major leaguer killed by a pitched ball).

In 1917, Camp Jackson (South Carolina), with Alan Thurman (University of Virginia) and Josh Cody (Vanderbilt), shut out Camp Gordon's "Steam Rollers." The next year Gordon's coach thought fans and reporters over-rated military elevens. Native American Lt. Frank Mt. Pleasant from Carlisle Institute (turned into a military hospital because of the war), von Kolnitz, and Sergeant Strupper, a recent Tech quarterback, had talent, but Georgia Tech clobbered Gordon, the losers also falling to Camp Hancock. Undefeated in collegiate play, Pittsburgh crushed Tech in 1918 for a mythical national college title.



The "Shining Light," George Halas, outfielder for the University of Illinois, 1917, a star in three sports. (Courtesy University of Illinois Archives)

State and served a brief prison sentence for avoiding the draft, later coached the Boston Redskins.

Cleveland's Naval Reservists, who did not play the Lakes in 1918, won most games, including



Shellfire killed Captain Belvidere Brooks as he stepped out of a cave, August 22, 1918. A member of Williams College class of 1909, he was captain and quarterback. (Courtesy Archives and Special Collections Williams College)



The best army eleven in the East, undefeated Camp Greenleaf (a school for medics in north Georgia), had little trouble destroying Camp Dix at D.C. for the eastern army championship. Why Dix played when several other camps had better records remains a mystery.

In the Southwest, Camp Bowie had a top eleven in 1917. That season, Camp Cody, coming over from New Mexico, upset Fort Bliss, which had a West Point Camp 2nd team All-American. The Fort found revenge the next year, beating Cody with a totally different cast.

After a brief season in January 1919 in France (the 36th Div. losing the finale), a couple of months later after elaborate playoffs, collegians from Texas and Oklahoma (trained at Camp Bowie) fought the 89th Division, (Camp Funston), which scored two touchdowns in the second half, overcoming one by the 36th in the first half when Carl Mahseet, a Native American from Oklahoma State College, punted the ball from near his end zone. The ball rolled to the other end of the field, where a fumble resulted in a score

Most every institution of higher education recorded deaths of student athletes, especially from varsity football. Williams College (Massachusetts) must hold the record for the most battlefield deaths, with at least ten lettermen, starting with the captain of the '09 eleven, killed in action in France.

## Boxing

Most military posts including ships had pugilists. Army officers believed boxing translated into better bayoneting. Some 3,000,000 supposedly learned to box in the military. Reporters criticized Jess Willard, heavyweight champ, for not helping the war effort, while almost all those of lesser weight showed up at military camps and installations. Few had military rank, but they instructed thousands of recruits. Some arrangements proved problematical as with Jack Dempsey, who helped at Great Lakes but was tried for evading the draft (not guilty, acquitted). Many troop ships crossing the Atlantic had matches. In Paris, the 29th Division chalked up nine straight over Frenchmen. A survey claimed 180,000 boxed between August through December 1918. In mid-December 1918, the

British Army took first in a tournament. American Expeditionary Forces championships produced seven winners, including Marine Private Gene Tunney in the light heavy. Leo Patterson, a black from Pioneer Infantry, won the light weight. This interest may explain why the sport attracted so many fans after the war.



## Basketball

The war forced the closure of a couple of Pennsylvania pro basketball leagues; most colleges retained their schedules. Three from a starting five at Bellevue College (Omaha, Nebraska, a school that shut down as of June 1919) died at the front. In 1919, Great Lakes Training Station produced a quintet that included Driscoll and Halas. which, on tour, won against small colleges but lost to the powerful Crescent Athletic Club in New York, where a reporter praised Halas, expecting to see him in right field for the Yankees in the spring. He would, but not for many games. That fall, Halas and Driscoll could be seen in civilian professional football uniforms which some claim as the origins of the National Football League.



## Military Olympics

General Order #241 (1919) authorized several A.E.F. championships, followed by Olympics for eighteen nations. When French workers balked for higher pay and given only 90 days to build Pershing Stadium financed by the YMCA, Pioneers completed the job. The YMCA sent over 48 other athletes to supplement those still in France. Sol Butler, a black from Dubuque University who had played football the previous fall with its Student Army Training Corps, won the broad jump.



Private Solomon Butler, winner of broad jump, receives an award from General Pershing at the Military Olympics. (Source: The Inter-Allied Games, Paris, 22nd June to 6th July, 1919)

Charlie Paddock, a recent high school grad, fired shells at the Huns as a Marine officer in 1918 and ran track at the University of Southern California in the spring. "The Human Fly" won the 100 and 220, helping the U.S. roll up 92 of the 120 points in track and field.

The U.S. won titles in baseball (no pros), basketball (A.E.F. champions led by pro Max Friedman out of Eastern Pennsylvania), marksmanship, and

swimming (Norman Ross, Stanford, 5 gold,). Belgians won the water polo matches. Australians were first in tennis, the U.S. without its top-ranked amateur who captured the A.E.F. officers' title in the competition on the Riviera early in the spring. Americans won 8 out of 12 boxing titles, Britain not taking part. Mostly Californian collegians gave France a battle before surrendering in rugby. The French, Americans, and British ended in that order in golf, with a city of Chicago and A.E.F. title holder and mates not matching the home country. One can only wonder about the results had Francis Ouimet participated. The winner of the U.S. Open at age 20 in 1913, Ouimet, rising from private to lieutenant, represented Camp Devens in several matches in the U.S. Czechoslovakia (a new country) captured soccer. Italy won most equestrian events, followed by France and the United States. A wounded French soldier won the marathon.



Francis Ouimet of Brookline, Massachusetts, joined the army in 1917. Shown here (right) at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, where he took basic training. A prominent golfer, in 1913 he had won the U.S. Open. (Courtesy NARA)



A few days after watching awards distributed and listening to the American and French national anthems along with speeches, the Doughboys left France. They knew a lot about fighting wars, but they also appreciated the value of athletics.

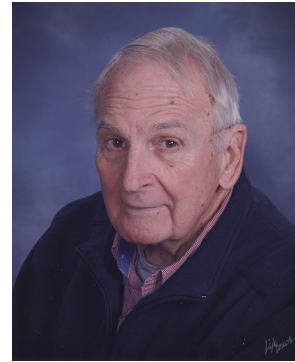
## Recommended Reading

Peter Stewart. 2021. *American Sports and the Great War: College, Military and Professional Athletics, 1916-1919*. McFarland & Co., Inc.

Jim Leeke. 2013 (comp.) *Ballplayers in the Great War: Newspaper Accounts of Major Leaguers in World War I Military Service*. McFarland & Co., Inc

*The Inter-allied Games: Paris 22nd June to 6th July 1919*. The Games Committee, 1919.

## About the Author



Dr. Peter Stewart, a native of Rhode Island, with degrees from Bates College, the University of Rhode Island, and the University of Virginia, has taught numerous courses in several collegiate fields in American history since 1962. In the 1980s, at Old Dominion University, he developed a specialty in sports history and started publishing in that field in 2009. *American Sports and the Great War: College, Military, and Professional* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co. Inc., 2021) is his latest publication.



American soldiers getting ready to play baseball in London's Hyde Park, July 1918. Pre-game meeting with umpire (flag) and team captains.





This cartoon in Ripley's Believe It or Not describes Lieutenant Bohrle as the "luckiest war flier in all history" in a 1917 incident in which he was flying as an observer in an aircraft piloted by a Lt. Rosengart. The engine stopped suddenly, throwing Bohrle from the aircraft at a height of 13,000 feet. As the plane headed down, Lt. Rosengart felt a bump and found that Bohrle had been dropped back into his seat again by the wind. Rosengart managed to restart the engine and return safely to their base.

The Ripley's cartoon misses some key aspects of this case. First, they got a name wrong. The observer was Oberleutnant Behrla (not Bohrle), and his pilot was Vizefeldwebel Rosengart. On top of that, Behrla didn't fall back into his seat. He was thrown from the cockpit, floated briefly above the aircraft, and then came crashing down on the rear of the fuselage. He broke through its plywood exterior and was trapped inside "as if in a coffin" and unable to return to his seat. Rosengart was able to land the plane safely and Behrla emerged unscathed. The incident took place on May 24, 1917. Behrla and Rosengart were members of Flieger Abteilung 44 and were flying Albatros C.V. 1211/16.

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James Hamilton

