

The Great War

FROM THE VAULTS OF THE MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by *Martha Kohl*

ON APRIL 7, 1917, following votes in the House and Senate, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation formally declaring war against Germany. The most famous dissenter was Montana's own Jeannette Rankin, who cast her first vote—in fact, the first vote cast by any woman in Congress—against the war. Rankin was not alone; forty-nine of her colleagues in the House and six senators also voted no.

Significantly, many Montanans agreed with Rankin. Montana was still a young state and largely populated by recent immigrants. In 1910, two-thirds of Montanans were either immigrants or the children of immigrants, and many of them retained strong ties to their home countries. Montana's second-largest immigrant group (after Canadians) was the Irish, many of whom vehemently opposed any alliance with England. Over 8,600 Montanans had been born in Germany and another 8,300 in Austria (though not all Austrians supported the empire).¹ Additionally, the Russian-German Mennonites who homesteaded in eastern Montana had a religious commitment to pacifism.

Outspoken opponents included some industrial labor unions and socialists who embraced the concept of syndicalism, where workers owned and profited from the means of production. They strongly opposed participating in what they saw as a “rich man's war and a poor man's fight” and promoted the idea of international brotherhood. The Industrial Workers of the World, established in 1905, proved the most ardent proponent of this ideology. Vehemently

objecting to the war and a universal draft, they pushed for a general strike in mining, logging, and agriculture to achieve their goal of industrial democracy.

On the other hand, many other Montanans strongly supported the war. Outraged at German U-boat attacks on American ships, beginning in 1915, and by reports of German atrocities, including “the rape of Belgium,” they believed that—as President Wilson claimed—the United States had no choice but to enter the fight to make the world “safe for democracy.” Roughly 12,500 Montanans voluntarily enlisted in the armed services, and by war's end another 23,000 had entered military service as draftees. As families saw their fathers, brothers, neighbors, and sons head to France, patriotism—and anti-German sentiment—grew, as did hostility toward people and organizations who opposed the war.

The result was a Montana in conflict with itself. In this, Montana was not alone. According to historian David Kennedy, “the war came at a time of peculiarly

Food Will Win the War To support the war, Americans reduced their food consumption without forced rationing through “Meatless Mondays,” “Wheatless Wednesdays,” and other voluntary sacrifices. This allowed the United States to furnish an additional 18.5 million tons of food to the Allies. Like many other organizations, the Hot Springs Red Cross Society published a fund-raising cookbook filled with “tempting recipes . . . [to] help banish memories of forbidden things.” In it, patriotic ditties urging conservation accompanied recipes like “Conservation Soup” and “General Pershing Salad.”



Poster featuring an illustration by Henry Raleigh. Chicago: Edwards & Deutsch Litho. Co., 1918. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Cartoon by W. A. Rogers published in the *New York Herald*, May 9, 1918. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Suppressing Speech In August 1917, Montana state senator Henry Myers, of Hamilton, introduced SB 2789, a law to punish “inflammatory talk.” It targeted the Industrial Workers of the World, who, Myers claimed, were “openly preaching strikes . . . and denouncing . . . the war.” The bill died in committee, but by 1918 attitudes had shifted. Shortly after the Montana legislature adopted Myers’s language for the Montana Sedition Act in February 1918, an almost identical bill passed the U.S. Congress by large majorities.

intense disagreements about the principles . . . American society should embody.” Americans fiercely debated the appropriate role of government in the economy, the effects of immigration on American culture, and the proper relationship between individual freedom and the common good. Thus, Kennedy claimed, “Americans went to war in 1917 not only against Germans in the fields of France but against each other at home. They entered on a deadly serious contest to determine the consequences of the crisis for the character of American economic, social, and political life.”²

In Montana, that contest came to a head with the August 1, 1917, lynching of Industrial Workers of the World organizer Frank Little in Butte and, beginning in April 1918, the arrest and imprisonment of seventy-nine people for “sedition,” defined by the Montana legislature as uttering, printing, writing, or publishing



Postcard, Foster Photo Co., Miles City, MT, 1918. The sender, Maria Drennan, wrote, “Knit 61 Pairs of Men’s Sox 41 Pair children for Red Cross Worked 1600 hours.” Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives Pnc 2013-50

Knit Your Bit Members of Kalispell’s Century Club raised two thousand dollars for the Red Cross through their store in the Masonic Temple’s basement. The 115 “liberty-loving women”—including Maria Drennan of Miles City, above, who had knit for soldiers during the Civil War—also met there to sew and knit everything from surgeons’ gowns to socks. They joined thousands of women across Montana, and over 8 million knitters nationwide, and produced 372 million relief articles during the war.

any disloyal, profane, violent, scurrilous, contemptuous, slurring or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the constitution of the United States, or the soldiers or sailors of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the army or navy of the United States . . . [or any speech] calculated to incite or inflame resistance to any duly constituted Federal or State authority in connection with the prosecution of the War.³

At other times, the conflict was less explicit: advertisers quietly withdrawing their support from

Burning German Text Books at Lewistown, Mont., March 27, 1918. Empire Studio, photographer. Courtesy of the Lewistown Public Library, Lewistown, Montana



Mob Action In March 1918, an angry Lewistown mob pursued men they believed to be “pro-German,” demanding they prove their allegiance by waving and kissing the flag. Among their targets was George Anderson, whom they threatened to lynch because he had refused to buy Liberty Bonds on religious grounds. The mob also seized and burned the high school’s German textbooks. The newspaper reported, “Fully two thousand people joined the evening parade, which served as a finale” to the day’s events.

the *Montana Staats-Zeitung* (one of Montana’s German-language newspapers) or men choosing to marry to avoid service since the military only drafted single men.

Faced with the task of interpreting this complicated history, the Montana Historical Society (MHS) is commemorating the centennial of this transformative historical event in a variety of ways. A web-based project, “Montana and the Great War,” highlights the diversity of Montanans’ experiences, expectations, and ideologies during World War I. At the heart of this project are a series of ArcGIS Story Maps. These interactive maps feature seventy vignettes from forty-one of Montana’s fifty-six counties in addition to providing data on military enlistment numbers and ethnicity. The brief vignettes reflect the ways the war changed the lives of Montanans both at home and

while serving overseas—as well as ways the war continued to impact Montanans’ lives into the 1920s.

The “Montana and the Great War” web page also provides links to pertinent articles regarding Montanans’ experiences during the war, including twenty-one from *Montana The Magazine of Western History*; information on World War I-era archival

Native American Courage In 1917, the U.S. government considered most tribal members “dependent wards” rather than citizens. Nevertheless, an estimated ten thousand Indians served and, once in France, were often assigned the most dangerous duties. They suffered casualty rates five times greater than the American Expeditionary Forces as a whole, and many, including Peter Barnaby (right) of the Flathead Reservation, earned citations for distinguished service. Barnaby (Co. 1, 26th Inf., 1st Div.) received the Croix de Guerre for his heroism in the bloody battle of Meuse-Argonne.



Peter O. Barnaby, Camp Merritt, New Jersey, 1919. Joseph K. Dixon, photographer. Courtesy of the Mathews Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

Montana's Birdmen World War I was the first major conflict involving aircraft. Of the eight thousand U.S. fliers, five hundred served in observation squadrons, conducting dangerous reconnaissance missions over enemy territory in flimsy airplanes that many described as "flaming coffins." Glasgow's William Belzer, one of five Montana observers, served in the 135th Aero Observation Squadron and saw action in the Saint-Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives. He received the Distinguished Service Cross for completing multiple reconnaissance missions while fighting off German fighter pilots.



William Belzer in a World War I Plane. Courtesy of Dennis Gordon, Missoula, Montana

collections in the MHS Research Center; clips from oral histories, also held in the Research Center; lesson plans; and links to twenty-six Montana newspapers that have issues from the World War I period available online through the MHS's newspaper digitization project. Creating this digital project required contributions from every MHS program and demonstrated the staff's impressive range of expertise—from research and writing to using ArcGIS

mapping software and editing sound recordings. The "Montana and the Great War" web page and the ArcGIS Story Maps can be found at <http://mhs.mt.gov/education/wwi>.

The World War I centennial extends through November 11, 1918, and the Montana Historical Society's examination of the centennial and its impact continues as well. The Original Governor's Mansion, which MHS curates, has focused its tours



Bonus Army Camp: "Who Killed the Bonus," Anacostia, Washington, D.C., 1932. Harris & Ewing, photographer. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The "Bonus Expeditionary Force" In 1924, Congress authorized bonuses for World War I veterans, to be redeemed in 1945. Suffering during the Great Depression, forty-three thousand veterans and their supporters marched on Washington in 1932, demanding an early payout. Police and regular army troops destroyed the marchers' camps after months of unsuccessful protest. Afterwards, the Bonus Expeditionary Force continued to hold rallies, including one in Dillon. Veterans finally received their bonuses in 1936—nine years early but too late for many.

on home front activism for the course of the anniversary. Titled “Doing Our Bit: Montana’s Home Front during the Great War,” this anniversary tour offers a hands-on look at how Montana women and children supported the war. In late 2017, the Museum will debut a more comprehensive exhibit, “Times of Trouble, Times of Change: Montana and the Great War,” that will run through the spring of 1919. Throughout the year and a half centennial, MHS will feature special programming exploring the war and its consequences. World War I also fits into the theme of the forty-fourth annual Montana History Conference: “Montana, 1917: Time of Trouble, Time of Change.” The conference is scheduled for September 21–23, 2017, in Helena.

The Montana Historical Society has also been digitizing archival World War I material, making it available online through the Montana Memory Project (montanamemory.org). With the assistance of MHS volunteers, the World War I military service cards from the Montana Attorney General’s Office records are already available. Recently, the MHS Research Center began digitizing the Montana Council of Defense records. Established during World War I to coordinate county war efforts, the Council of Defense also investigated cases of alleged disloyal activities and passed several ordinances that had the force of law. These ordinances included making it illegal to hold church services in German, prohibiting parades and demonstrations without a permit, and requiring “every adult person having the necessary physical and mental capacity and ability to do so, to work and engage in some legitimate occupation for at least five days during each calendar week for the period of the existing war.”⁷⁴

Researchers from across the country will be able to access these digitized records, but we hope, especially, that digitizing them will help high school students and teachers engaged in authentic, primary

source research. With support from MHS staff, high school classes in over a dozen Montana counties will conduct research on how the war affected people in their communities to create web-based projects of their own. We will link these county-based projects on the “Montana and the Great War” web page as the schools complete them.

Pulling together this multifaceted centennial project has provided an opportunity to reflect on history, memory, and the relative significance (or insignificance) of anniversaries. It has also led to discussions

about ways history can shed light on contemporary politics. Many of the issues Montanans struggled with during World War I we still debate today: What does it mean to be a “good” American? Are immigrants living in the United States a threat to our security or way of life? Does our economic system work for everyone—and, if not, is there anything we can do to fix that? What does it mean to “support our troops”? Should there be any limits on dissent or freedom of speech? What is patriotism?

We invite you to participate in this centennial commemoration by exploring the Story Maps and the “Montana and the Great War” web page. Check out

the newly digitized archival resources and enjoy touring the exhibits. We hope you will listen to the voices of our shared past—of war supporters and war opponents, Red Cross workers and German parishioners, miners and railroad workers, pacifists and soldiers, farmers and nurses, leaders and gold star mothers—and then ask yourself what has changed, what has remained the same, and what might we learn from examining the history of World War I.

Martha Kohl is a historical specialist at the Montana Historical Society and the author of *I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings* (MHS Press, 2011).



Soul Wounds (novel cover), Missoula Publishing Company, 1934. Montana Historical Society Research Center Library

Soul Wounds In 1934, the Missoula Publishing Company printed *Soul Wounds*, a novel about World War I written by Montana author and disabled war veteran Al Schak. A member of the First Infantry Division—nicknamed the “Big Red One”—Schak participated in five major engagements and was reported missing and presumed dead three times. He returned to Montana with his health broken. *Soul Wounds*, based loosely on his wartime experiences, was his attempt to describe the effects of war on the human spirit.

guardianship of Anna. Dedman and Newell, *Empty Mansions*, 48.

12. Anna's mother, Philomene, continued to operate boardinghouses in Butte. Eventually, she resided in a lavishly furnished house on West Park Street (the more fashionable part of Butte), owned by one of Clark's mining associate's, W. C. Siderfin. This home was one block away from Clark's own mansion on Granite Street. *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 Population, Butte City* (Washington, DC., 1910). Author acknowledges the invaluable assistance provided by the Butte-Silver Bow County Land Records Office, Butte. Anna's brother, Arthur, became first a timekeeper in a Clark-owned mine and later a clerk in one of Clark's offices. Anna's younger sister, Amelia, also spent at least one year at the exclusive women's boarding school of Forest Glen on the outskirts of Washington, D.C.

13. *Butte Weekly Miner*, July 13, 1904; Mangam, *The Clarks*, 99–100.

14. *Anaconda Standard*, July 13, 1904. The artist's drawing of Anna looking slightly cross-eyed was loosely based on a photo of her as a young teenager. Anna had two differently colored eyes, a condition known as heterochromia iridium, which can give an individual the appearance of being cross-eyed. Clark's chief Copper King rival, Marcus Daly, had owned the *Standard* until his death in November 1900. Daly's editor, John Durston, was still at the helm in July 1904.

15. *Anaconda Standard*, July 13, 1904.

16. *Ibid.*, July 12, 1904.

17. Mangam, *The Clarks*, 99–100.

18. For Clark's gifts, see Dedman and Newell, *Empty Mansions*, 49, 62.

19. For 1904 rumors, see *Saint Paul (MN) Globe*, May 4, 1904. For earlier rumors, see "Clark Lucky in Love if Not in Politics," *New York World*, Apr. 27, 1900. Later in 1900, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Clark was set to marry his ward, erroneously reported as "Ada" LaChapelle. A miffed Clark scoffed, "I would as soon think of marrying one of my own daughters." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 18, 1900. Within a few months, by spring 1901, he would again be the subject of marriage rumors. In April 1901, just a month before Clark's putative marriage to Anna, newspapers reported that Clark and Hattie Rose Laube of South Dakota were engaged. See the *Minneapolis Journal*, Apr. 16, 1901, for a representative report. Laube was later discredited for, at the very least, overstating the nature of the relationship. See the *Anaconda Standard*, Apr. 23, 1901.

20. *New York Times*, Apr. 19, 1903.

21. Gordon, *Phantom of Fifth Avenue*, 67.

22. Excerpts of the letter are in Mangam, *The Clarks*, 102.

23. The letter is paraphrased by Mangam and supposedly dated July 6, 1904. Mangam claimed that the elder Clark wanted the letter destroyed after his son read it. No other record of the correspondence exists. *Ibid.*, 102, 111.

24. Gordon notes, in reference to Clark's backstory, that "[t]he secret to getting away with a big lie is making sure all of the minor facts are straight." Gordon, *Phantom of Fifth Avenue*, 68.

25. *Butte Weekly Miner*, June 17, 1901.

26. *New York Times*, May 26, June 1, 1901.

27. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1901.

28. In late May 1900, for example, he footed a wedding for his oldest daughter, Katherine, that included a guest list in excess of six thousand, including the entire New York social register, and was catered by Del Monico's. *New York Herald*, May 29, 1900.

29. Research assistants for Dedman and Newell in their research of *Empty Mansions* could not locate any record. Bill Dedman, email correspondence with the author, Aug. 22, 2016.

30. *Anaconda Standard*, July 21, 1904. The lengthy story also contains an elaborate fiction about a long, idyllic honeymoon the pair spent immediately after the May 1901 marriage. A search of New York City Municipal Archives conducted by staff on March 11, 2011, produced no record of marriage deposited by LaChapelle.

31. The court later determined that the three women were not Clark's children. "The matter of the estate of William A. Clark, deceased, Alma E. Clark Hines, Effie I. Clark McWilliams, and Addie L. Clark Miller, plaintiffs, v. Anne E. Clark, Huguette Marcelle Clark, Mary C. de Brabant, Katherine L. Morris, Charles W. Clark, William A. Clark, Jr., et al.," 1926, case 7594, Montana District Court of the Second Judicial District, Silver Bow County. Transcript located in the Butte-Silver Bow County Archives, Butte, Montana.

32. *Ibid.*, 364–67. It is not clear why the pair visited the U.S. embassy in 1909 specifically to swear formally about the lack of record of their marriage, but it was possibly connected to the legal process in which they were then engaged to allow their daughters to move permanently to the United States, which they would do the following year. Bill Dedman, email correspondence with the author, Aug. 23, 2016.

33. *New York Herald*, July 13, 1904; Mangam, *The Clarks*, 100.

34. The home, on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Seventy-Seventh Street, was

situated directly across from Central Park along New York Millionaire's Row. As Dedman and Newell detail, "It contained twenty-six bedrooms, thirty-one bathrooms, and five art galleries. Below the basement's Turkish baths, swimming pool, and storage room for furs, a railroad spur brought in coal for the furnace, which burned seven tons on a typical day, not only for heat but also to power dynamos for the two elevators, the cold-storage plant, the air-filtration plant, and the 24,200 light bulbs." Its construction cost the equivalent of roughly \$250 million in contemporary currency. Dedman and Newell, *Empty Mansions*, 4–8.

35. "Last Will and Testament of William A. Clark, Deceased, dated May 29, 1922," William A. Clark Papers, SC 536, MHS.

36. See Dedman and Newell, *Empty Mansions*, 125–204, for Anna's life after Clark's death. In 1946, during one of her moments of extravagant patronage, Anna sold an original Cézanne portrait of his wife and used the proceeds to found the famed Paganini quartet, endowing them with four Stradivari: two violins, a viola, and a cello. *Ibid.*, 157–58.

37. Gordon, who has had access to Huguette's personal estate, believes Clark was truly smitten, as for the remainder of his life he would write "impassioned letters to his 'Darling Wife' and 'Sweetheart Cherie' and 'Ma Chere Anna,' signing them 'fondest love.'" See Gordon, *Phantom of Fifth Avenue*, 63. Family photographs of them later in life show them kissing and one with Anna's arm draped languidly over the aging ex-senator. See "Photo Gallery," Empty Mansions website.

38. Quoted in Malone, *Battle for Butte*, 12–13.

The Great War

1. *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken In The Year, 1910: Statistics For Montana . . .* (Washington: General Publishing Office, 1913), 588. Total population of Montana in 1910 was 376,053.

2. David Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition* (New York, 1994), 137, 41.

3. Clemens P. Work, *Darkest before Dawn: Sedition and Free Speech in the American West* (Albuquerque, NM, 2005), 260–61.

4. Nancy R. Fritz, "The Montana Council of Defense" (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1966), 130.