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H O D E I S L A N D Y E A R B O O K



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Rhode Island in World War I

BY GEORGE G. HERR

Almost every decade of the nineteenth century saw a major crisis of war or revolution that involved one or more of the leading nations of Europe. Because of this numerous people strove to find a basis for international peace. Men like Alfred Nobel, Andrew Carnegie, and Count Leo Tolstoi gave generously of their wealth and abilities to advance this cause. In 1899 Tsar Nicholas II of Russia originated the First Hague Peace Conference which created the Hague Court, the forerunner of the permanent Court of International Justice. A second Hague Peace Conference was held in 1907, but neither of these Conferences could stop the arms race that was going on among the Powers. Pacifists throughout the world united in organizations which held annual international congresses. By 1914 there was a total of 160 such organizations, seventeen in the United States, but their influence was slight since they failed to crystallize into a single great international society. In spite of all efforts, crisis piled on crisis with ever-increasing frequency. The creation of the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy pushed France into uniting with Russia and England in the Triple Entente. Kaiser Wilhelm II's determination to have a German navy second to none was a direct challenge to Britain, whose fleet for centuries had been considered the "Mistress of the seas." The Moroccan Crisis of 1905 and the Agadir incident of 1911 were kept from flaring into war only by special concessions that France made to Germany. In 1908 Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina crushed Serbia's hopes of adding these areas to her own small lands. The two Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 brought about strong enmities between these neighboring countries and stimulated Serbia's hopes for a greater Serbia. The Austro-Hungarian government had already decided that the little country's ambitions should be crushed when the world received the fateful news that on June 28, 1914, two Bosnian youths, hence Austrian subjects although they were members of a Serbian secret society, had assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife during an official visit to Sarajevo. On July 24th, having received assurances of Germany's complete support, Austria issued an ultimatum to Serbia which the *Providence Journal* promptly called "too harsh." Ultimatum followed ultimatum, armies began to move, and the war was begun. Without hesitation the *Journal* placed the blame on Germany in an editorial of August 3rd: "Germany in the past ten years has come to be known as the bully and braggart of Europe. Time after time she has violated solemn agreements . . ." Within the next few days it further charged that the war had been brought about by that "flamboyant paranoiac," the "irresponsible and arrogant Kaiser."



Myles Standish served in Italy with the Brown Ambulance Unit.

The announcement of the war's beginning brought an immediate response from some one hundred French residents of Woonsocket who, on August 7th, paraded through that city before leaving to embark for France. Among them were several women who planned to enlist as nurses.

When Belgium's neutrality was violated, the *Journal* stated editorially, "William of Germany and his people have an account to square with God . . . for they have willfully . . . turned a fair land into a shambles, taken a peaceful little nation by the throat . . . and crushed its very heart beneath their iron tread . . . All the tramping of Germany's legions all the thunder of her bombs and batteries, cannot drown out the cry of one little Belgian child." Belgian Relief Committees were quickly formed in all parts of the state, and women at home, on street cars, at lectures and concerts, even at card parties, began to knit as they had not done

since Civil War days, and thousands of articles were sent to Belgian soldiers and to non-combatant sufferers.

In general, however, Rhode Islanders quickly settled back into a normal routine. Although they read the frequent reports of Richard Harding Davis, Floyd Gibbons, Alexander Woollcott, and others, about what was happening in Europe, they didn't believe that it could happen to them. Then, early in February, 1915, when Germany announced that she would begin to use submarines widely, John R. Rathom, editor of the *Providence Journal*, started to publish articles that were to make him and his papers internationally famous. He told the people of Rhode Island that Germany's decision to use submarines "is not a surprising declaration. Germany has shown a consistent disregard of civilians from the start;" a few days later, he added, "Germany's punishment — the scorn and disapprobation of her contemporaries everywhere — is already decreed, whatever the outcome of her whole foolhardy enterprise." In one article after another, he tried to show how German secret agents worked to delay or sabotage munition plants, or their output that was destined for England and France.

A few weeks later two U-boats slipped through the British blockade and, after surfacing in New England waters, one docked at New London, Connecticut, and the other sailed into Newport harbor. On May 1st, the American ship *Gulfight*, flying the American flag, was torpedoed. This flagrant abuse of American hospitality created an uproar, but this was small compared to that which came six days later with the news of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, with 1,195 casualties, of whom 124 were Americans, including John C. Wolfenden and Ernest J. Burke of Central Falls, and four Pawtucket residents: Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Hanson, Samuel Mannon, and Edwin Moore. American feeling against Germany became so intense that only with the greatest of difficulty was Wilson able to maintain his policy of neutrality.

Meanwhile Rathom's papers continued to expose German machinations in this country. While the sources for these reports were never disclosed, it was hinted that they came from people in the offices of steamship lines, in various consulates, and even in the German Embassy itself. Claiming to have broken the German code, a constant alert was kept from wireless stations at Point Judith and on Block Island to intercept messages purportedly sent from a German-owned station at Sayville, Long Island, to the German government. In an extra edition of July 1st they boasted that they had unearthed the plans of a German submarine campaign along the United States coast and that they had forwarded all of this information to the authorities in Washington.

In September, when England and France were seeking a \$1,000,000,000 bank loan for food and munitions, the *Journal's* strong articles were undoubtedly influential in bringing a prompt and favorable response from Rhode Island banks.

Again in February, 1916, when plans for an American Embargo Conference were widely announced, the *Journal's* reporters learned that this Conference was actually the brainchild of Count von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador at Washington, and of Baron Zwiédinek, the acting-Ambassador for Austria-Hungary, in the hope of changing America's basic policy. This brought forth a front page cartoon entitled, "The Kaiser's daily recreation," which showed him walking through a hallway whose runner was the American flag. The paper concluded that "the Germans are no better liked . . . than they were before their official plotters set out to interfere with our national policies . . . German 'efficiency' has proved highly inefficient in the last year and a half on this side of the world."

Because of reporting like this and its impact upon American citizens, particularly those of Rhode Island, Count von Bernstorff in his autobiographical *My Three Years in America* said that he had asked Secretary of State Lansing to stop



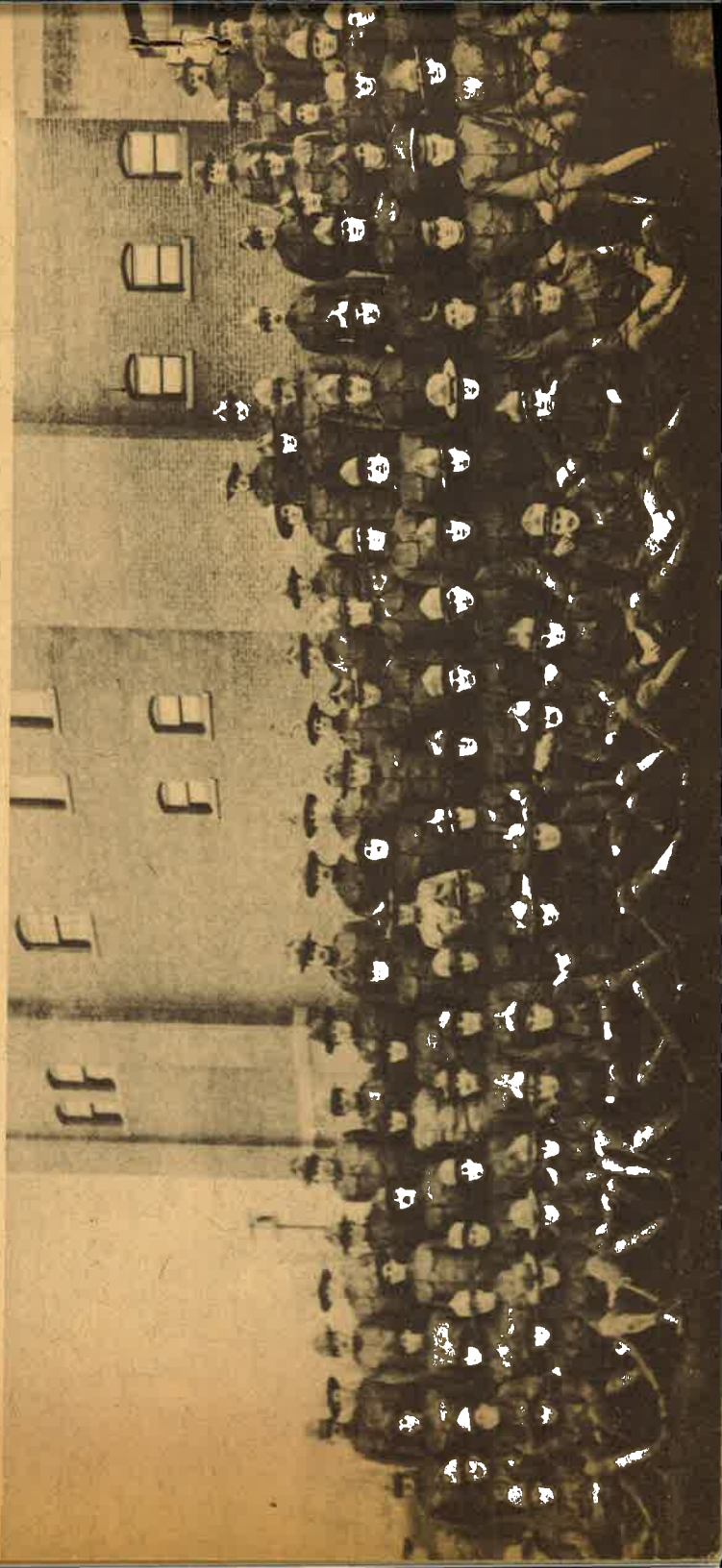
Major Norman D. MacLeod and Captain W. Gordon MacLeod.

these "baseless attacks" upon Germany by the *Providence Journal*, because it was common knowledge that the paper was Anglo-American. Yet it was the work of the *Journal*, together with the *New York Herald*, that influenced Secretary Lansing to request the withdrawal of the German attachés, Captain von Papen and Commander Boy-Ed, as *personae non gratae*, at the end of 1915. Von Bernstorff insisted that, because of the hatred and malice toward Germany pouring out constantly in its leading articles, the *Providence Journal* was one of six leading papers in the country most influential in pushing America into war. In fact, after Wilson's reelection on the slogan "He kept us out of war," and the renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare by Germany, Rathom's repeated urging for the United States to enter the conflict certainly furnished some basis for the von Bernstorff charges.

Many other voices also took up the call for preparedness as more and more German perfidy was revealed. Numerous Rhode Islanders were volunteering for overseas ambulance and flying duty, much of it with a Toronto organization popularly known as the American Legion. Major General Leonard Wood, fortunately for the nation, started the Plattsburg camps for training civilian officers in 1915, and traveled throughout the country urging his fellow citizens to prepare. As a result, the directors of the Providence National Bank set the pace for Rhode Island by voting on April 24, 1916, to allow a "reasonable number of their employees" to go to Plattsburg for four weeks "without prejudice to their advancement and without loss of salary."

Two months earlier the women of Rhode Island were urged to work for preparedness and, under the leadership of Mrs. Charles William Lippitt, thousands of surgical dressings were made and sent to Paris and Bordeaux. It was pointed out that the knowledge gained from this activity would be incalculable value should our country be drawn into the struggle.

On June 3, 1916, Rhode Islanders made a mass appeal for America to stay at peace, but be prepared for war. In an enormous Preparedness Parade, in which everyone in the state was invited to participate, 54,542 people, including 10,000 women, marched in the procession that went on for over six hours. The Chief Marshal was Major G. Edward Buxton, supported by Governor R. Livingston Beeckman and Providence Mayor Joseph H. Gainer. Mrs. Beeckman led the women's division. Other leaders included the Right Reverend James DeWolf Perry, John H. Cady, Sydney R. Burleigh, Richard B. Comstock, and many others. Marching to the music of seventy-five bands they passed the reviewing stand in



front of Providence City Hall where an honor guard of 200 Civil War veterans flanked more than one thousand school children arranged to form an enormous living flag. In this way the people showed the Nation "the fact the Rhode Island is for and with the Union, now as always in the past."

The colleges, too, were doing their part for preparedness. Rhode Island College at Kingston reported that its students had been required to take a course in military science since 1896 and, in face of the nation's dangers, they now had four companies training for two hours a week under Captain W. E. Dove, U. S. A. retired, so that their members might be efficient officers, if the country ever needed a volunteer army. At Brown University Professor James Quayle Dealey instituted an R.O.T.C. program which, by the time the war actually came, included 175 men in training. There were three of the student captains, — Zenas R. Bliss, Fred B. Perkins, and John W. Haley — who had earlier spent a summer training at the Harvard R.O.T.C. camp. Besides their military studies and training, the students of both schools cooperated with many preparedness demonstrations and the numerous fund appeals by the various agencies doing war work.

The Rhode Island National Guard, according to the reports of Adjutant General Charles W. Abbot, was generally carrying on through 1916 with a program not greatly different from that of earlier years. In fact, at the end of 1915 the units had 113 men less than the minimum prescribed by the War Department, yet their request to increase the budget from \$16,000 to \$27,000 so that they might be better prepared "when trouble comes" was not granted. In October, 1915, George I. Scott, a summer resident at Newport, proposed that the public be asked to contribute to a \$25,000 fund for the Guard to develop aeronautics. With the *Providence Journal* as sponsor, the drive was started with a donation of \$7,500 by Miss Lyra Brown Nickerson, and was a quick success. Two machines were purchased, a Sturtevant and a Curtiss, but the legislature refused to vote funds for their maintenance. Nevertheless the Guard went ahead to train as many men as practicable and hopefully asked for an appropriation from Congress. One of the machines was assigned to Battery A, because its leader was First Lieutenant Gerald T. Hanley who owned a Curtiss hydroaeroplane and was an expert operator. Lieutenant Hanley, however, was soon called for duty at the Mexican Border, and the machine had to be stored until September when Second Lieutenant Ezra H. Kent, Jr., took up the instructions and continued them until the "weather was too cold for good results to be secured." The second machine,

Battery A, 103rd Field Artillery after returning from the Mexican Border in 1916 cited as "the most efficient National Guard Battery in the United States."



which was turned over to the Naval Militia, soon had an accident and had to be returned for repairs which were not completed until late fall. On February 4, 1916, officers of the National Guard met at the home of Col. Charles F. Tillinghast. They drew up a resolution, pointing out that the efficiency of the local Guard was second to none in the country and asked that the National Guard be transferred to the direct control of the Federal Government. This resolution was sent to Rhode Island's representatives in Washington, but no action was taken at this time.

In February, 1917, the National Guard was called upon to protect important railroad bridges in the state, a duty they were still performing when war was finally declared. They promptly began to prepare for mobilization, but there were no orders until July 15th when the National Guard, 3,900 strong, paraded through Providence before going to Quonset for reassignment in small groups to various posts in Southern New England. Finally all mobile units were assigned to the 26th (Yankee) Division, which sailed for France in October.

After his reelection by a narrow margin, President Wilson learned that Germany would resume unrestricted submarine warfare. Because of this von Bernstorff was handed his passport on February 3, 1917, and diplomatic relations were broken. In March four American ships – the *Algonquin*, *City of Memphis*, *Illinois*, and *Vigilancia*, were sent to the bottom by U-boats. This brought the total of American lives lost by submarine sinkings to 209 in the two and a half years since Sarajevo. To add further to these overt acts, the Zimmerman telegram revealed a German proposal for Mexico to attack the United States and regain its lost territory, should Americans enter the war. After considerable soul-searching the President, on April 2nd, asked Congress to declare war, which they did four days later. The *Evening Bulletin* of that date carried the headline

PRESIDENT ISSUES WAR PROCLAMATION
DEMANDS AID OF ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS
SENATE VOTES \$100,000,000 FOR EXECUTIVE

and the United States started out on the endless task of making the world "safe for democracy," with an army numbering 200,000 men.

To take the place of the National Guard that left in July, Rhode Island looked to the Independent Chartered Commands to act as a local defense force. Colonel Alvin A. Barker, retired, was recalled to command these units and he immediately sought recruits with the result that the Providence companies soon numbered about five hundred men, and the Bristol Artillery and Kentish Guards each surpassed one hundred. This service continued for nearly a year before the state legislature, on May 9, 1918, voted to authorize a State Guard for the "duration of the present war in the United States" and to continue for six months after. Because of Colonel Barker's work to make his groups suitable for a Home Guard, it was agreed that any company with at least one hundred enlistees would be recognized as coming within the terms of the new act. Providence, Westerly, South Kingston, Woonsocket, and East Providence were immediately qualified, and by July 1st all units of the Chartered Commands were included. Apparently the budget provided for the Guards was inadequate, and plans were made to raise money to buy woolen uniforms. On Thanksgiving Day they put on a pageant reproducing the action at Vimy Ridge, simulating as nearly as possible the advances and retreats of the actual battle. The attendance was less than expected, but the performers generally were pleased because, "as a spectacle, it was a decided success," even though no funds were added to the treasury and it became necessary for the men to buy their own uniforms. With the war over, the former members of the National Guard did not return from Europe as quickly as expected. Steps had to be taken so that the State Guard could be legally continued



Captain (later Major) Everitte St. John Chaffee.

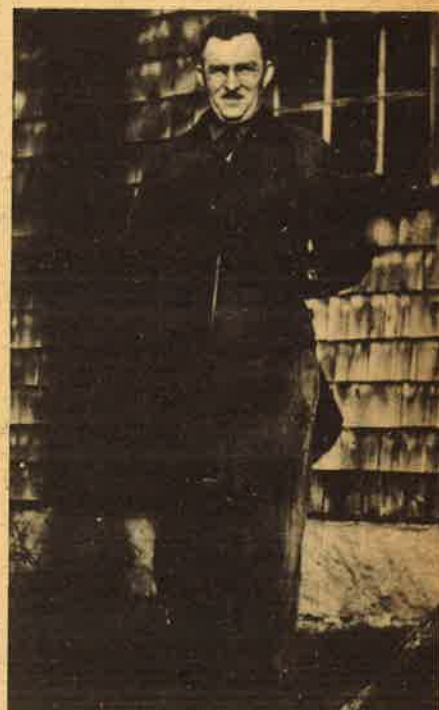
beyond the six-month period originally set. Not only were the men of the former units slow in being returned to America, but when they did arrive home many ex-servicemen were reluctant to rejoin their old companies. In fact, it was not until 1922 that the National Guard was restored to the place it was expected to hold.

Major General John J. Pershing was ordered to France on May 26, 1917. Promptly upon arrival he set up his headquarters at Chaumont, about 100 miles east of Paris, and sent a request to the President for between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000 soldiers that he would need by May of the next year. In Rhode Island enlistments were going ahead at a rapid pace. Congress, now deciding against relying solely on volunteers to complete the ranks of the American Expeditionary Forces, passed the Selective Service Act under which ten million potential draftees were registered before the end of the year; the age limits were soon extended to include the 18 to 45 year old men, thus more than doubling the number registered. Before the war ended one-fifth of these had either volunteered or been called up. A very high percentage had freely enlisted since, as volunteers, they could choose the branch of service which they preferred. As a result, by the time of the Armistice, we had 2,000,000 men in Europe, of whom 28,817 were from Rhode Island.

With the formation of the 103rd Field Artillery on August 5, 1917, by combining National Guard Units from Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, Rhode Island's Battery A, that had been cited for its work in the Mexican Border incident as "the most efficient National Guard Battery in the United States," became the nucleus of Batteries A, B, and C, and Troop M, Rhode Island Cavalry, became the Headquarters Company. Added to these were 476 National Guard coast artillerymen, 246 of them from Rhode Island. When their training period at Boxford, Massachusetts, was completed, some of their officers under the command of Col. Emery T. Smith were Capt. Norman D. MacLeod, Regimental Adjutant; Maj. R. S. Hamilton, First Battalion; Capt. Harold R. Barker, Battery A; Capt. Gerald T. Hanley, Battery B; Maj. Everitte St. John Chaffee, Battery C; and Lts. Harold Babcock, James Doherty, Duncan Langdon, Everett S. Hartwell, John Rancourt, and Harold W. Merrill.

This unit left for France in two sections. The First and Third Battalions sailed from Hoboken, October 9th, on the *Baltic*, which had transported Gen. Pershing and his staff four months earlier. After a brief stop at Southampton, they arrived at LeHavre on October 30th and were at once sent to Camp Coetquidan in Brittany for training. Meanwhile, the Second Battalion under Maj. Chaffee was sent to Newport News to transport horses and mules to St. Nazaire, and did not embark until December 14th. After delivering their cargo, they rejoined the earlier section at Coetquidan in January. During this training period, a number of changes were made among the officers. Maj. Hamilton was sent to Staff College, and eventually returned to command his battery. Lts. Babcock, Doherty, and Langdon, after special training, were assigned to balloon observation, and it was in the performance of this service that Lt. Doherty was honored with the Croix de Guerre for heroism during an airplane attack on his balloon. Lts. Hartwell, Rancourt and Merrill became trained aeroplane observers. Lt. Merrill and his pilot were burned to death as a result of a nighttime forced landing; Lt. Hartwell was returned to the United States in August to be an instructor with the rank of Captain; Lt. Rancourt was honored for outstanding heroism with the Croix de Guerre as well as the Distinguished Service Cross.

Since the 26th, or Yankee, Division's men were the first troops to reach the training area, it was their job to clean the grounds, mend roads, build hospitals, install electrical and telephone services as well as to undertake an intensive pro-



Lt. James Doherty.

gram of learning trench warfare, — and to do all of this in spite of an enormous shortage of most needed supplies and under very unfavorable weather conditions. At the end of February they moved to the Soissons area, recently taken from the Germans, to undergo the second phase of their training under the close supervision of veteran French soldiers. Here they practiced the use of the bayonet and learned how to string wire and to lay mines. Their rapid progress pleased their French instructors, and they were declared seasoned soldiers by the second week of March.

The camps which Gen. Wood had established at Plattsburg in 1915 and 1916 were experimental, and no commissions were given to the businessmen who attended. This was changed after America's entry into the war. Because of the need for preparing thousands of new officers to staff the rapidly expanding army, Plattsburg graduates now received commissions as Captains and First or Second Lieutenants. Among the Rhode Islanders who received their commissions here were Maurice A. Wolf, Dwight T. Colley, Wheaton Vaughan,* Reginald Adelman, Melvin Sawin, Morgan Rogers, Stuart T. Coleman, Ira Shepard, and Sidney Clifford. Regular army officers were skeptical about these "ninety-day wonders," yet most of them proved very able leaders, and many of them served with distinction.

It was natural that many from the state should find service in the Navy. Yachtsmen who had already learned much about navigation and the handling of boats found it quite easy to secure a naval commission. These included Frederick B. Thurber, who was quickly promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander and put in charge of a group of mine sweepers, Ensign Arnold S. Hoffman, assigned to a submarine chaser based in Nova Scotia, and Ensign Webster Knight, 2nd, who did convoy duty on the USS *Santiago*.

When the first American units reached France, both the British and French wanted them to be replacements in their divisions. Pershing would not agree to this, but insisted that the Americans should be assigned certain sectors of the front and fight under their own commanders. By the end of 1917 only 175,000 American troops had reached France, and about the same number arrived during the next six months. Clemenceau and Lloyd George strongly opposed an autonomous American Army; even stronger opposition came from Gen. Ferdinand Foch when he became Supreme Commander of all Allied Forces in April, 1918. About this time Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and took herself out of the war, thus freeing thousands of German troops for service on the Western Front. Ludendorff was now able to send sixty-four German divisions who broke through the French and British defenses along a 50-mile front and penetrated 37 miles deep to Cantigny, cutting off many French roads and making the loss of Paris imminent. Under such circumstances Pershing went to Foch's headquarters and declared in his best French, "The American people would consider it a great honor for our troops to be engaged in the present battle . . . all that we have are yours. Use them as you will." But nothing came of the offer, and Foch did not use any American divisions at this critical time. When Ludendorff started to advance again, it was further to the northwest and against the British in the Lys Valley. Foch now assigned a division area to the Americans near the village of Cantigny.

On April 20th the Germans staged a surprise raid with shock troops on three companies of Major General Clarence R. Edwards' Yankee Division training in the Lorraine village of Seicheprey. This was the first time Americans faced the enemy, and many Rhode Islanders received their first taste of battle. The opening heavy attack was made on Maj. Chaffee's 1st Battalion and was answered by fire from First Lt. Joseph C. Davis' A Battery and Capt. Hanley's B Battery. Lt. Davis had one officer and three men killed in the early barrage, but "he only sent for

* Killed in action.



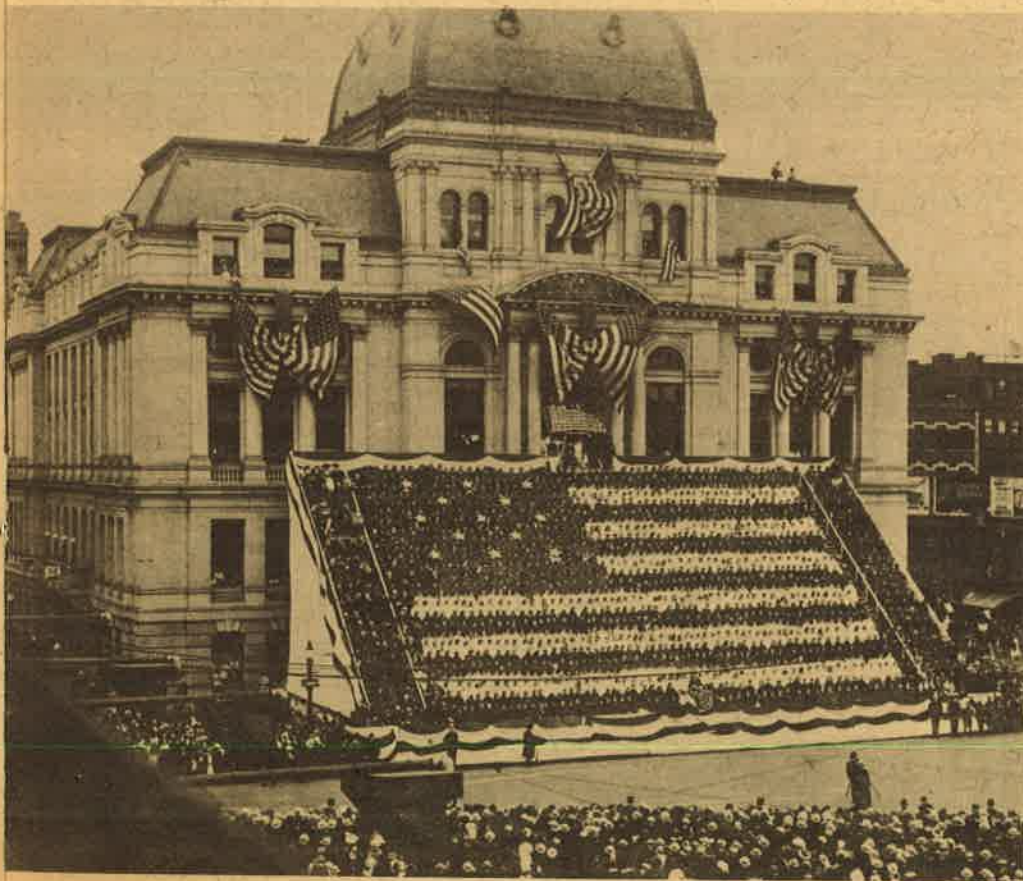
Tubby, Stubby and Company. Front Row — Ernest M. Cook, Arthur B. Bourbon (Stubby), Louis Watson. Back Row — James E. Barnes (Tubby), Archie Coats, George Holmes.

more ammunition and kept his heavy guns working." Both sides claimed a victory; however, the German attackers were driven back, but not until they had inflicted over 600 casualties.

On May 27th Pershing sent the division that was opposite Cantigny in a surprise attack upon the weak German XVIII Army that was holding the town. For three days the Germans repeatedly counterattacked, before Cantigny could be counted a clear-cut victory, America's first in the war.

About this same time Ludendorff was launching his third major offensive of the spring by smashing French positions at Chemin Des Dames and driving through for 30 miles to the Marne River, south of Reims. Hoping to duplicate the 1914 victory, Foch ordered two American divisions up to the Marne. The 2nd was entrusted with the sector west of Château-Thierry with orders to support the French against von Boehn's 7th Army, and also to capture Belleau Wood. After more than a week of vicious fighting the combined American and French forces checked von Boehn's advance and started pushing the enemy back across the river. On July 1st this front was turned over to the Yankee Division, permitting the 2nd Division to retire to a supporting position.

Up to this time the Germans had congratulated themselves that their diplomats had kept the United States out of the war for so long, and they were sure that any American help to the Allies would be "too little and too late." To them the speed with which America had been arming was a horrible revelation. Ludendorff now knew that his troops must achieve a massive victory before too many American divisions reached the front to stop him. On July 15th he began another tremendous offensive against the lightly held Château-Thierry sector. One spearhead pushed through, capturing Reims, Epernay and Châlons in rapid succession; another centered its attack on the understrength American 3rd and the 42nd, flanked by a



Living flag of school children, a part of the "Preparedness Parade" in Providence in June 1916.

French Moroccan unit and the untried 28th Division. The 103rd Regiment with Maj. Chaffee, now promoted to Lt. Colonel, and Capt. Hanley replacing him in command of the 1st Battalion, arrived from Lorraine in time to participate in this action. With unsurpassed coolness and courage, but at terrific cost, they stopped this fierce German attack in the early hours of July 15th.

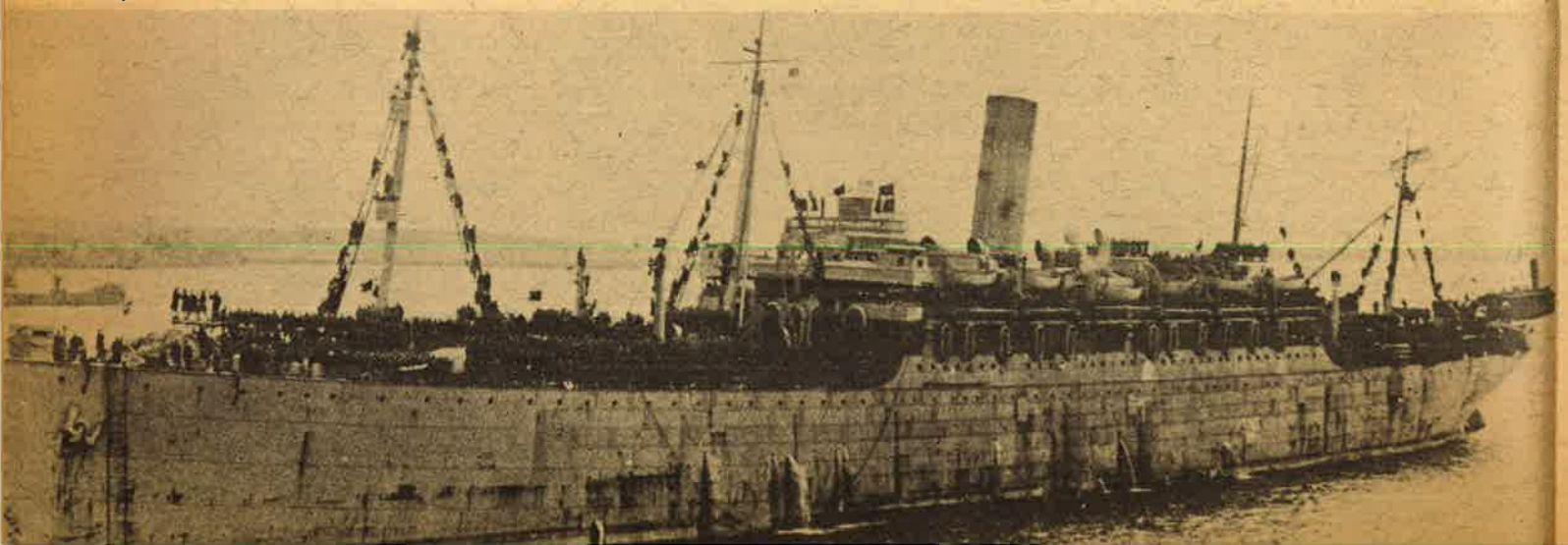
This was the end of Ludendorff's offensive strength. The 200,000 fresh American troops had helped to bring about the turning point in the war. The initiative had at last passed to the Allies.

Following preconceived plans Foch decided to try to take the vital town of Soissons and thus cut off the main north-south railroad supplying German units inside the Marne salient, and also block their main escape route. Using the American 1st and 2nd along with a French colonial division, the advance was made along a line paralleling the Aisne River, while four American divisions, including the 16th, were carrying on a holding operation along the Marne until Soissons should be taken. In a driving rain on July 17th, about an hour before dawn, the advance upon the Soissons-Chateau-Thierry road was begun. Two days later, in spite of extremely heavy casualties the key highway was cut and was safely in Allied hands. As this push continued, the Germans made an orderly retreat toward Vesle before they could be completely cut off. This overwhelming success in the Second Battle of the Marne led the German chancellor to admit later, "the most optimistic among us understood that all was lost."

The war now entered a new and final stage. The Germans were no longer able to undertake a serious offensive. Foch, elevated to marshal, was preparing for an all-out offensive against the center of the German line in the Meuse-Argonne region, not far from Verdun. Again, the French commander tried to have Pershing agree to a scattering of American forces, but the American general was adamant in insisting that the American Army should remain an independent unit. While he was willing to take part in the new offensive, he felt that his still relatively green army should be tested first at Saint-Mihiel which the Germans had uncontestedly held with second-line troops since 1914. When this was completed he would move his army to the Meuse-Argonne front. Since these proposed battlefields were sixty miles apart, this would be a difficult, but not impossible assignment.

On September 12th, following three very rainy days that left gullies of mud everywhere, the heavy bombardment of Saint-Mihiel began. Air help came from 800 planes under the command of Col. Billy Mitchell. Most of these machines were piloted by Americans who had enlisted earlier and received excellent training in the Lafayette Escadrille before transferring to the U. S. Air Service. Along with these veterans were a large number of younger Americans, including James Norman Hall and Eddie Rickenbacker, who had been more recently trained at Kelly Field in Texas. Mitchell here proved his argument that massed air power could

The USS MONGOLIA brought our boys home.



destroy an enemy's will to resist. After a few hours of this combined ground and air bombardment Pershing sent in two veteran divisions, the 1st to the eastern face of the salient and the 26th (YD) to the western face. During this operation Capt. Joseph C. Davis was killed. Within twenty-four hours these divisions linked up near Vigneulles, sealing off all of the salient to the south and completely eliminating Saint-Mihiel as a threat. The Americans had taken 16,000 prisoners and about 450 cannon, while recapturing some 200 square miles of territory. By September 16th the movement of the troops to the Meuse-Argonne front was under way.

September 26th, the date for the start of the new offensive, found 200,000 American soldiers on the line, ready to go. On their left was the tangle of the Argonne Forest. Their chief aim was to take the enemy command post on the heights at Montfaucon. They plodded through seas of mud before they came within a mile and a half of the town; only to be pinned down by enemy fire from the hill. Among those checked was a division under the command of peppery Capt. Harry S. Truman of Missouri. Meanwhile the 103rd was engaged in diversionary attacks on Marcheville and Riaville. The next day, despite stubborn defense, the Americans pushed on until the Germans in Montfaucon, finding themselves hemmed in on three sides, withdrew, leaving this important height to the Americans.

As more troops arrived from Saint-Mihiel, Pershing replaced his tired, battle-thinned companies with the veteran divisions. Plans were already made for a new offensive to start on October 4th aimed at the strongly defended Hindenburg Line. Foch entrusted to the Americans the general offensive to break the German western front. Pershing's troops began their attack on time, but the advance was so slight that rumors began to be spread that the American general should be relieved. Such ideas were promptly squelched by Foch who admitted that this Meuse-Argonne sector was the toughest terrain of the front. During this first day a patrol of the 82nd Division was trapped and nearly annihilated. One of the leaders of this Division was Maj. G. Edward Buxton, who had had a famous "man to man" talk with Sgt. Alvin York, a conscientious objector from Tennessee, who was a member of his outfit. Unfortunately for the Germans, Buxton had earlier argued York out of his convictions so that on this 4th day of October York refused to recognize that the odds were against him; instead, when the Germans charged down on him, he shot twenty-five of them, broke up a machine gun nest, and returned with 132 captives. Five days later First Lt. John I. Rancourt was on visual reconnaissance over enemy lines near Fismes when his plane was attacked by enemy flyers. Although wounded three times, he continued to operate a machine gun and brought down an enemy plane. While he was in the hospital he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross with a citation for "extraordinary heroism," to which he replied, "I didn't do a thing outside the regular line of work." He now was promoted to the rank of captain.

On October 16th the Yankee Division, together with the French XVII Corps, took up positions on a line north of Verdun in an area they came to know as "Death Valley." Their orders were to blast the Germans from positions that threatened Pershing's right flank. This same area had been fought over two years before and was still filled with the shell holes from the earlier battle. Here the 102nd faced some of its toughest fighting in the war. Lt. Dwight T. Colley was assigned the task of helping to take back Haumont Woods. He accomplished his mission and was able to bring back his wounded when he had to leave. For this he received a special citation and a promotion.

Throughout the month of October the offensive made little progress. In addition to their heavy battle losses, the troops had to contend with a raging influenza



Pat Hanlon.

epidemic; but the medics soon found that rum worked wonders with those who were ill, and also acted as a prophylactic for those not yet infected. Finally on November 1st the 1st Division, in cooperation with our Allies, broke the German center and forced Gallwitz to withdraw east of the Meuse. The Armistice ended the American pursuit after they had reached Sedan and cut the enemy rail communications.

The civilian leaders in Berlin had already learned from Ludendorff that the nation was defeated. Rumors that Germany was trying to arrange a cease-fire reached some of the German troops and many began to desert. Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary had already given up. Feeling the hopelessness of the situation the lines of some of Germany's crack divisions began to crumble.

It was evident on November 8th that German troops were withdrawing along the entire front, but there was no letup in the fighting. The 2nd Battalion moved toward Beaumont to open a path for the 104th Infantry. It was the Yankee Division's last big advance. Just three hours before the Armistice agreement was officially in effect, Capt. Colley, one of the few Rhode Islanders to hold an infantry commission in the YD, went over the top and was making a slow crawl toward the German lines when he received the order at 10:40 A.M. to cease the attack. He later said that the opportune coming of the Armistice was like receiving a reprieve. He had proved himself an outstanding graduate of Plattsburg, and in the short period that America had been fighting he had been awarded the Croix de Guerre, the Italian War Cross, and the Distinguished Service Cross.

Following November 11th there were numerous changes in commanders, as they worked to get the various divisions ready to go home. In praise of his men, Gen. Frank E. Bamford, who had replaced Gen. Edwards late in October, said, "From your entry into the battle line in February, 1918 . . . until . . . you laid down your arms . . . you have shown yourselves worthy sons of the country that gave you birth." Although the Yankee Division was apparently ready to return to America, orders to start moving to Brest did not come until early March. The first unit sailed on the *Mount Vernon* on March 20th, arriving in Boston two weeks later. The last American division, except for the small force left behind as a German occupation army, left France on August 31st, 1919, to be followed the next day by Gen. Pershing and his staff.

During the two years that American soldiers were in France, 684 Rhode Island men had died and 1,693 were wounded. Innumerable heroic acts were done. Among the heroes who made significant contributions were Lt. Joseph C. Davis,* Sgt. Joshua K. Broadhead,* and Corp. Russell K. Bourne who were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. Others who also received the D.S.C. were Capt. Dwight T. Colley,* Norman D. MacLeod,* Capt. John I. Rancourt,* and Pvts. Walter F. Lyons,* and Thomas J. Hickey. Many others performed distinguished services, including Zenas R. Bliss, John E. Baird, Harold R. Barker, G. Edward Buxton, Norman S. Case, William C. Chase, Herbert R. Dean, Chester A. Files, Robert W. Kenny, Charles B. Malone, William B. McCormick, H. Stanford McLeod, Milton W. Pooler, Edgar J. Staff, Harold C. Thomas, and Don C. Thorndike.

The activities on the home front of all the business and charitable groups in the state are too numerous to enumerate; yet, it is necessary to mention a few to illustrate how Rhode Islanders cooperated to lend a helping hand in any manner that would help to bring about final victory.

Before the end of 1914, under the sponsorship of the *Providence Journal*, over \$12,000 was donated to the Belgium Relief Fund. During the next year the American Red Cross raised funds to provide surgical dressings and other medical needs for use in the war zones. Acting as intermediary between various relief



William A. Soban.



Captain Harold R. Barker and companion.

organizations and the American and French governments the Red Cross supervised the distribution of 500 tons of supplies a month to the French people in hospitals and to other sufferers who were homeless or in need. On February 17, 1915, G. Elton Parks of Providence, one of the first of the people of the state whom the Red Cross had recruited, left for France to serve in the ambulance corps near the battle lines.

Two years later the Providence Chapter of the A.R.C. proudly pointed to a recent drive in which they had secured 5,000 new members to help its humanitarian work of manufacturing, collecting, packing, storing, and distributing hospital garments, surgical supplies, and knitted articles of all kinds. To further this work Dr. George W. Gardner had arranged for "Miss Parsons, a well-qualified teacher from the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital," and Mrs. Frank Mathews of Rhode Island Hospital to conduct a course on surgical dressings for Red Cross volunteers. In another public campaign \$25,000 was received to equip a 250-bed hospital at the naval base; this would be operated by doctors and nurses from R. I. Hospital. As our soldiers were called into service, the A.R.C. organized a Civilian Relief Committee, with Mayor Joseph H. Gainer as chairman, to help families of the state whose heads had entered the armed services. During the winter of 1917-1918, Junior Red Cross groups were organized in all the schools, and the boys were encouraged to make checker boards for wounded soldiers while the girls, and also some of the boys, knitted. On June 2, 1918, an appeal was made for 350 nurses to work in war hospitals, and by the end of September 280 nurses, 160 of them from Providence, had been enrolled. During that same summer, the Rhode Island Red Cross conducted its last war fund campaign under the chairmanship of William A. Viall. Although the state's quota was set at \$800,000, the final tally showed that the people's gifts were a third of a million dollars more than the goal.

The Y.M.C.A. also was popular with our servicemen. At home the local branches acted as hosts to any as long as they remained in the United States. An even greater contribution to the war effort was made through the hundreds of Red Triangle canteens that they set up for those overseas. In recognition of this Congress voted to place the "Y" on the same official footing as the Red Cross. To support these services, citizens of the state contributed \$472,000 in November, 1917; among those who gave were 1,500 members of the Providence Boys' Division, each of whom agreed to work to earn \$10 for his contribution. Almost every week through 1918 an outstanding speaker was brought in to the Providence branch to discuss the general theme, "Wake-up, America." Early in May recruits

were sought for general service in France as well as for duty involving extreme danger and hardship on transports. Already John G. Olmstead, Acting General Secretary in Providence, and Willard A. Brackett had volunteered and been sent to posts in France. During the summer six more staff members left to serve our men in Europe. By the end of the war over fifty Rhode Islanders were working with the Red Triangle, among whom were Brown professors Theodore F. Collier, W. H. Kennerson, and Albert E. Rand; others were Charles W. Bradlee, C. A. Bryant, James C. Collins, Harry Parsons Cross, Rev. Francis A. Cunningham, Alfred H. Gurney, Rev. Edward Holyoke, Arthur R. Magee (who had charge of the largest "Y" warehouse at Nancy, France), Frederick S. Sibley, Dr. Ralph A. Sweet, and Leslie Taber. Several women were later honored for their cooperation in these foreign activities: Miss Flora A. Curtis who represented the Pawtucket Y.W.C.A. for fourteen months in France, and also the Misses Alice M. Comstock and Grace M. Sherwood. In all more than fifty volunteers from Rhode Island worked with the Red Triangle to make the life of our doughboys in Europe a little more endurable. That their efforts were successful is witnessed by hundreds of letters that the men in service sent home, and by the special honors that the government bestowed on C. W. Bradlee and Rev. F. A. Cunningham who were cited by divisional commanders for services beyond the call of duty.



C. Bird Keach.

Late in October, 1917, the *Providence Journal* broadcast a plea for funds to provide smokes for "Our Boys in France." Col. H. Anthony Dyer made a special appeal for the success of this Tobacco Fund at an opening concert at the Majestic Theater. No goal was set, but by early spring over \$43,000 had been collected.

Early in 1918, with the help of Brown students, the Salvation Army under the leadership of William H. Gardner raised over \$15,000 to support the work of their "Sallies" and doughnut kitchens which they set up near the front line trenches. By this time there were so many separate drives for money that President Wilson requested that the seven patriotic organizations, — Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Salvation Army, Knights of Columbus, Jewish Welfare, American Library Association, and Camp Welfare, — unite in a single annual fund appeal. As a result the local charities planned a campaign for November which quickly reached its goal under the guidance of Burton E. Kile.

Rhode Island, as a great industrial center, played a large part in increasing war production in which hundreds of companies were involved. An outstanding example of speeding the war effort was provided by the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation. Starting from scratch on November 17, 1917, to build a factory at Field's Point to make boilers for United States' ships, they shipped their first boiler to Squantum, Mass., on July 18th, and within the next few days they had established a new speed record of a boiler a day. While many companies made exceptional contributions, Henry D. Sharpe was so pleased with the way in which Brown and Sharpe employees faced up to the needs of the war that he published a special "Memorial," proudly pointing out that its 911 workers who entered the armed services represented 12½% of the company's work force; of these nineteen had died. The company was also proud of those workers "who served and sacrificed at home, through conservation of food and resources, and through loyal service at their work, so that the Government might not lack funds, the people food, nor the army munitions, to effectively prosecute the war." In the several 1918 drives of the various wartime charities they had donated over \$55,000; they had also invested almost \$1,500,000 in the five Liberty Loan Drives. In the state as a whole these Liberty Loans received the support of everybody, — men, women, boys and girls, — with the result that the Government received \$204,000,000, 25% more than the state's quotas.

To increase the food supply of the country, every family was urged to plant

a war garden. We cannot estimate how much this project benefitted the war effort; however, Brown and Sharpe workers were reported to have raised vegetables valued at more than \$13,000 in a single year. Throughout the state large numbers of people of all ages strove to do their share. One of these gardeners was Mrs. Isabelle Dow, age 78, who found age no barrier to work; according to her, "Everybody should have planted a garden and have invested in a Liberty Loan Bond."

With the war over, the leaders of Providence began to consider what would be a suitable memorial to honor those who had defended their country so well. It was first proposed to erect a memorial building with an auditorium, but the price tag of \$2,000,000 was too high. The next suggestion of a hospital and school for ex-servicemen was also rejected. Late in 1922 the state voted \$300,000 to put up a Memorial Arch at the Broad Street entrance to Roger Williams Park, but this was quickly opposed by many who wanted a downtown location. In 1925 Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney suggested a Memorial Carillon Tower; the City Council voted "No" to this idea. After much more discussion, it was finally agreed to have artists and sculptors submit sketches in competition; as a result the design of Paul Philippe Cret for a fluted shaft monument was approved in 1928. At long last, on Armistice Day, 1929, the people of Providence gathered in the newly named Memorial Square to join with Senator Jesse H. Metcalf, Governor Norman S. Case, and others, to dedicate this "tribute in granite" in honor of the 12,000 men and women of the city who had served in the various services, both public and private, and particularly in memory of the 220 who had given their lives, and the 400 who had been wounded. All of these had "worked to restore an honorable peace, . . . a peace secured by men 'who made their breasts the bulwark and their blood the meat' during the most destructive conflict in history." So ended the World War which everyone at that time sincerely hoped was the "war to end all wars."

On parade in Providence after the war.

