PROJECT READER

WORLD WAR I AND AMERICA

TOLD BY THE AMERICANS WHO LIVED IT
The readings presented here are drawn from World War I and America: Told by the Americans Who Lived It. Published to mark the centenary of the American entry into the conflict, World War I and America brings together 128 diverse texts—speeches, messages, letters, diaries, poems, songs, newspaper and magazine articles, excerpts from memoirs and journalistic narratives—written by scores of American participants and observers that illuminate and vivify events from the outbreak of war in 1914 through the Armistice, the Paris Peace Conference, and the League of Nations debate. The writers collected in the volume—soldiers, airmen, nurses, diplomats, statesmen, political activists, journalists—provide unique insight into how Americans perceived the war and how the conflict transformed American life. It is being published by The Library of America, a nonprofit institution dedicated to preserving America’s best and most significant writing in handsome, enduring volumes, featuring authoritative texts. You can learn more about World War I and America, and about The Library of America, at www.loa.org.

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Many Americans do not appreciate the key role the United States played in deciding the outcome of World War I, the deep impact the war had on Americans who lived through it, or the profound ways in which it continues to resonate today. While the U.S. was a belligerent for only nineteen of the war’s fifty-two months, and suffered a fraction of the losses of the other major combatants, in the climactic campaigns of the war Americans fought with ferocious intensity. In the five and a half months the American Expeditionary Forces were engaged in major fighting, the U.S. lost more than 50,000 men killed in action, a combat toll greater than that of the entire Vietnam War. Equally important, the war ushered in powerful and complex changes in American culture and society. The war helped women to finally win the vote and ushered in the permissive Jazz Age, but also led to Prohibition and a heightened fear of immigrants. Amid deadly racial violence and frustrated hopes for full citizenship for African Americans, it gave rise to the militant “New Negro” and began the Great Migration to the North. It made the United States the most powerful actor on the global stage, and brought about a dramatic debate over America’s role in the world. And it called into question the traditional meanings of glory, honor, courage, causing many to believe, as Ernest Hemingway wrote, “There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity.”

This Reader presents twenty-two selections by American participants in the conflict, written from 1915 to 1929. They are drawn from the Library of America volume World War I and America: Told by the Americans Who Lived It, and give a firsthand look at the war from different points of view. Understanding how Americans perceived the conflict at the time allows us to encounter World War I on its own terms and to draw connections with the experiences of Americans today, both combatants and civilians. The selections focus on seven
key themes. Each theme features an introduction by a distinguished scholar, questions for discussion, and suggestions for further reading. The reader is intended to help facilitate an informed and rewarding conversation about the war and its consequences.
Introduction

I. WHY FIGHT?

The American people’s views on the war ran the gamut in 1914 from indifference to support for the Allies to a desire for strict neutrality. A small minority expressed a desire for a German victory. By 1917, however, American opinion was almost entirely sympathetic to the Allies as German atrocities in Belgium, the sinking of the Lusitania, and the massacre of the Armenians made the Central Powers seem like a threat not just to British and French values, but to American ones as well. Alan Seeger represents the significant group of Americans who believed deeply in the Allied cause from the war’s very first days. They saw Belgium as an innocent victim of German aggression, and France and Britain as defenders of a democratic way of life and international order that Imperial Germany was trying to destroy. Tens of thousands of Americans joined the Allied armies or volunteered to serve the Allies as nurses, doctors, and aid workers. They served in the cause of democracy and freedom. Many, though by no means all, of them came from privileged backgrounds. Very few American citizens volunteered to serve the Central Powers, a clear indication of where American sympathies lay.

The resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 and the decoded Zimmerman telegram, in which the Germans tried to enlist Mexico as an ally against the United States, made almost all Americans hostile to the German cause. Some were also motivated by the March 1917 revolution in Russia, which deposed Tsar Nicholas II in favor of a democratically-minded centrist provisional government. Nicholas’s downfall made the war come into greater focus as a conflict between the world’s autocracies and its democracies. In such a contest, many Americans saw themselves as having no choice but to side with the democracies. The promise, however brief it turned out to be, of democracy triumphing in Russia also held out the hope of something positive coming out of the war that might justify its enormous toll in human life.
Not all Americans were convinced. Socialists were divided on the war. Some supported American entry, but only if America would dedicate its power toward creating a more equitable and just world. They saw Britain and France as imperial oppressors not worthy of American assistance. Few socialists, however, saw in a German victory any hope for progress for Europe or the world. The authors of the Majority Report of April 1917 saw the war as a naked competition for power and profits among the world’s capitalists. Such a war, they believed, did not deserve the support of workers anywhere, nor could it advance the cause of democracy. They were a small percentage of Americans, but their critical view of the conflict would prove influential both during and after the war.

President Woodrow Wilson laid out a justification for American entry in his address to Congress on April 2, 1917 asking for a declaration of war. Wilson believed deeply that wars were the products of avaricious and corrupt regimes, not the result of the will of people who had to fight them. From this core belief, Wilson concluded that America’s enemy was not the German people, but Kaiser Wilhelm and his militaristic government. Replacing that government with a democratic and open one would give the German people the chance to determine their own, peaceful, future alongside their neighbors. Wilson also believed that economic exchange and open markets would give nations more incentive to cooperate with one another than to compete.

By entering the war, Wilson believed that the United States could reshape the world, making it more economically open, more democratic and less imperialist. With shared democratic values as a basis for the new world order, he hoped, there would be no reason for a second world war. Americans thus went to war led by a president determined both to protect his nation’s freedom from the growing German threat, as represented by the Zimmermann Telegram and the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, and to bring about the reformation of the world.

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Alan Seeger graduated from Harvard College in the remarkable class of 1910 that also produced T. S. Eliot, John Reed, and Walter Lippmann; and his life beyond Harvard Yard quickly became as artistic and bohemian and politically engaged as any of theirs. Trying his hand at poetry, he lived in Greenwich Village for the next two years and in Paris for two years after that. He enlisted in the French Foreign Legion in August 1914, along with fifty other Americans. By the fall he was serving in the trenches, and on December 8, he wrote to the New York Sun: “for the poor common soldier it is anything but romantic. His rôle is simply to dig himself a hole in the ground and to keep hidden in it as tightly as possible. Continually under the fire of the opposing batteries, he is yet never allowed to get a glimpse of the enemy. Exposed to all the dangers of war, but with none of its enthusiasms or splendid élan, he is condemned to sit like an animal in its burrow and hear the shells whistle over his head and take their little daily toll from his comrades.” His first major battle experience came with the French offensive in Champagne, which began on September 25, 1915. Afterward he wrote to his mother.

And now we are back in the far rear again, the battle is over, and in the peace of our little village we can sum up the results of the big offensive in which we took part. No one denies that they are disappointing. For we know, who heard and cheered the order of Joffre to the army before the battle, that it was not merely a fight for a position, but a supreme effort to pierce the German line and liberate the invaded country; we know the immense preparation for the attack, what confidence our officers had in its success, and what enthusiasm ourselves. True, we broke their first line along a wide front, advanced on an average of three or four kilometers, took numerous prisoners and cannon. It was a satisfaction at last to get out of the trenches, to meet the enemy face to face, and to see German
arrogance turned into suppliance. We knew many splendid moments, worth having endured many trials for. But in our larger aim, of piercing their line, of breaking the long deadlock, of entering Vouziers in triumph, of course we failed.

This check, in conjunction with the serious turn that affairs have taken in the Balkans, makes the present hour a rather grave one for us. Yet it cannot be said to be worse than certain moments that arrived even much later in the course of our Civil War, when things looked just as critical for the North, though in the end of a similar guerre d'usure they pulled out victorious.

But perhaps you will understand me when I say that the matter of being on the winning side has never weighed with me in comparison with that of being on the side where my sympathies lie. This affair only deepened my admiration for, my loyalty to, the French. If we did not entirely succeed, it was not the fault of the French soldier. He is a better man, man for man, than the German. Any one who had seen the charge of the Marsouins at Souain would acknowledge it. Never was anything more magnificent. I remember a captain, badly wounded in the leg, as he passed us, borne back on a litter by four German prisoners. He asked us what regiment we were, and when we told him, he cried “Vive la Légion,” and kept repeating “Nous les avons eus. Nous les avons eus.” He was suffering, but oblivious of his wound, was still fired with the enthusiasm of the assault and all radiant with victory. What a contrast with the German wounded, on whose faces was nothing but terror and despair. What is the stimulus in their slogans of “Gott mit uns” and “für König und Vaterland” beside that of men really fighting in defense of their country? Whatever be the force in international conflicts of having justice and all the principles of personal morality on one’s side, it at least gives the French soldier a strength that’s like the strength of ten against an adversary whose weapon is only brute violence. It is inconceivable that a Frenchman, forced to yield, could behave as I saw German prisoners behave, trembling, on their knees, for all the world like criminals at length overpowered and brought to justice. Such men have to be driven to the assault, or intoxicated. But the Frenchman who goes up is possessed with a passion beside which any of the other forms of experi-
ence that are reckoned to make life worth while seem pale in comparison. The modern prototype of those whom history has handed down to the admiration of all who love liberty and heroism in its defense, it is a privilege to march at his side—so much so that nothing the world could give could make me wish myself anywhere else than where I am.

Most of the other Americans have taken advantage of the permission to pass into a regular French regiment. There is much to be said for their decision, but I have remained true to the Legion, where I am content and have good comrades. I have a pride particularly in the Moroccan division, whereof we are the first brigade. Those who march with the Zouaves and the Algerian tirailleurs are sure to be where there is most honor. We are troupes d’attaque now, and so will assist at all the big coups, but be spared the monotony of long periods of inactive guard in the trenches, such as we passed last winter.

I am glad to hear that Thwing has joined the English. I used to know him at Harvard. He refused to be content, no doubt, with lesser emotions while there are hours to be lived such as are being lived now by young men in Flanders and Champagne. It is all to his credit. There should really be no neutrals in a conflict like this, where there is not a people whose interests are not involved. To neutrals who have stomached what America has consented to stomach from Germany—whose ideals are so opposite to hers—who in the event of a German victory would be so inevitably embroiled, the question he put to himself and so resolutely answered will become more and more pertinent.

*October 25, 1915*
Wilson addressed Congress on February 26, asking for the authority to arm American merchant ships. The House of Representatives approved the measure by a vote of 403–13 on March 1, but a Senate filibuster led by Robert “Fighting Bob” La Follette, the progressive Republican from Wisconsin, blocked its passage before the 64th Congress adjourned on March 4. Enraged, Wilson denounced the “little group of willful men” who had “rendered the great Government of the United States helpless and contemptible” and imposed an executive order to arm the ships; but this new policy of armed neutrality failed to stop the Germans from sinking American vessels. On March 20 the cabinet unanimously recommended asking Congress for a declaration of war; and the next day Wilson requested that a joint session convene on April 2. The last president to write his own speeches, he toiled over multiple drafts right up until the morning of his address. On the evening of April 2, Wilson arrived at the Capitol to deliver one of the most important speeches in American history, contending that a war of choice had become one of necessity. Eight words embedded in his argument—“The world must be made safe for democracy”—have remained the bedrock of American foreign policy for a century. The speech received thunderous approval, which depressed the President. “My message to-day was a message of death for our young men,” he said to one of his advisers. “How strange it seems to applaud that.” A moment later, Wilson laid his head on the Cabinet table and sobbed.

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2 April, 1917 8.30 P.M.

One of the things that has served to convince us that the Prussian autocracy was not and could never be our friend is that from the very outset of the present war it has filled our unsuspecting communities and even our offices of government with spies and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot against our national unity of counsel, our peace within and without, our industries and our commerce. Indeed it is now evident
that its spies were here even before the war began; and it is unhappily not a matter of conjecture but a fact proved in our courts of justice that the intrigues which have more than once come perilously near to disturbing the peace and dislocating the industries of the country have been carried on at the instigation, with the support, and even under the personal direction of official agents of the Imperial Government accredited to the Government of the United States. Even in checking these things and trying to extirpate them we have sought to put the most generous interpretation possible upon them because we knew that their source lay, not in any hostile feeling or purpose of the German people towards us (who were, no doubt as ignorant of them as we ourselves were), but only in the selfish designs of a Government that did what it pleased and told its people nothing. But they have played their part in serving to convince us at last that that Government entertains no real friendship for us and means to act against our peace and security at its convenience. That it means to stir up enemies against us at our very doors the intercepted note to the German Minister at Mexico City is eloquent evidence.

We are accepting this challenge of hostile purpose because we know that in such a government, following such methods, we can never have a friend; and that in the presence of its organized power, always lying in wait to accomplish we know not what purpose, there can be no assured security for the democratic governments of the world. We are now about to accept gauge of battle with this natural foe to liberty and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its power. We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretence about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions
of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

Just because we fight without rancour and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for.

It will be all the easier for us to conduct ourselves as belligerents in a high spirit of right and fairness because we act without animus, not in enmity towards a people or with the desire to bring any injury or disadvantage upon them, but only in armed opposition to an irresponsible government which has thrown aside all considerations of humanity and of right and is running amuck. We are, let me say again, the sincere friends of the German people, and shall desire nothing so much as the early re-establishment of intimate relations of mutual advantage between us,—however hard it may be for them, for the time being, to believe that this is spoken from our hearts. We have borne with their present government through all these bitter months because of that friendship,—exercising a patience and forbearance which would otherwise have been impossible. We shall, happily, still have an opportunity to prove that friendship in our daily attitude and actions towards the millions of men and women of German birth and native sympathy who live amongst us and share our life, and we shall be proud to prove it towards all who are in fact loyal to their neighbours and to the Government in the hour of test. They are, most of them, as true and loyal Americans as if they had never known any other fealty or allegiance. They will be prompt to stand with us in rebuking and restraining the few who may be of a different mind and purpose. If there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of stern repression; but, if it lifts its head at all, it will lift it only here and there and without countenance except from a lawless and malignant few.

It is a distressing and oppressive duty, Gentlemen of the
Congress, which I have performed in thus addressing you. There are, it may be, many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts,—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.
The Socialist Party of America formed in 1901; and in the 1912 presidential election, its candidate, Eugene V. Debs, received 901,551 votes—6 percent of the popular vote. Immediately following the declaration of war, the Socialist Party held an emergency convention in St. Louis to consider its position. The party’s minority report stated: “Having failed to prevent the war by our agitation, we can only recognize it as a fact and try to force upon the government, by pressure of public opinion, a constructive program.” It called for securing peace on “democratic terms,” continued freedom of speech and the press, a national referendum on conscription, and using the war to advance “democratic collectivism.” Morris Hillquit, Charles Emil Ruthenberg, and Algernon Lee wrote the majority report, which flatly opposed the war. Party members approved by a vote of 22,345 to 2,752, making the Socialist Party the largest political organization to oppose American participation in the war.

The forces of capitalism which have led to the war in Europe are even more hideously transparent in the war recently provoked by the ruling class of this country.

When Belgium was invaded, the government enjoined upon the people of this country the duty of remaining neutral, thus clearly demonstrating that the “dictates of humanity,” and the fate of small nations and of democratic institutions were matters that did not concern it. But when our enormous war traffic was seriously threatened, our government calls upon us to rally to the “defense of democracy and civilization.”

Our entrance into the European war was instigated by the predatory capitalists in the United States who boast of the enormous profit of seven billion dollars from the manufacture and sale of munitions and war supplies and from the exportation of American food stuffs and other necessaries. They are
also deeply interested in the continuance of war and the success of the allied arms through their huge loans to the governments of the allied powers and through other commercial ties. It is the same interests which strive for imperialistic domination of the Western Hemisphere.

The war of the United States against Germany cannot be justified even on the plea that it is a war in defense of American rights or American “honor.” Ruthless as the unrestricted submarine war policy of the German government was and is, it is not an invasion of the rights of the American people, as such, but only an interference with the opportunity of certain groups of American capitalists to coin cold profits out of the blood and sufferings of our fellow men in the warring countries of Europe.

It is not a war against the militarist regime of the Central Powers. Militarism can never be abolished by militarism.

It is not a war to advance the cause of democracy in Europe. Democracy can never be imposed upon any country by a foreign power by force of arms.

It is cant and hypocrisy to say that the war is not directed against the German people, but against the Imperial Government of Germany. If we send an armed force to the battlefields of Europe, its cannon will mow down the masses of the German people and not the Imperial German Government.

Our entrance into the European conflict at this time will serve only to multiply the horrors of the war, to increase the toll of death and destruction and to prolong the fiendish slaughter. It will bring death, suffering and destitution to the people of the United States and particularly to the working class. It will give the powers of reaction in this country, the pretext for an attempt to throttle our rights and to crush our democratic institutions, and to fasten upon this country a permanent militarism.

The working class of the United States has no quarrel with the working class of Germany or of any other country. The people of the United States have no quarrel with the people of Germany or any other country. The American people did not want and do not want this war. They have not been consulted about the war and have had no part in declaring war. They
have been plunged into this war by the trickery and treachery of the ruling class of the country through its representatives in the National Administration and National Congress, its demagogic agitators, its subsidized press, and other servile instruments of public expression.
Questions for Discussion and Suggestions for Further Reading

I. WHY FIGHT? / Introduction by Michael S. Neiberg

1. Alan Seeger was an American who volunteered to fight for France in 1914. How does his view of the war compare with the one presented by President Wilson in 1917?

2. Why did Americans fight in World War I? How do their reasons for going to war compare with those of the Americans who have fought in more recent conflicts?

3. What reasons did the Socialists give for opposing the war in 1917? How do their criticisms compare with those directed at American foreign policy today?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


Jennifer D. Keene, World War I: The American Soldier Experience (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011)


II. THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR / Introduction by Edward G. Lengel

1. How can language be used to describe modern combat to those who have never experienced it?

2. What place do traditional concepts of courage and strength have on a battlefield where even the bravest and most skilled soldiers are vulnerable to sudden, random, and unseen forces of destruction?

3. War is defined by violence, and yet much of the experience of war takes place away from scenes of violence, in moments of anticipation, recollection, or simply waiting. How do the selections portray/evoke these moments?
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


III. RACE AND WORLD WAR I / Introduction by Chad Williams

1. How did W.E.B. Du Bois see the role of black Americans in fighting for democracy in “Close Ranks”? When he wrote “Returning Soldiers” less than a year later, how had his vision changed?

2. How does the military of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries compare with the army of 1917–19 in regards to race? What impact has the desegregation of the armed forces had on American society as a whole?

3. What does Charles Isum’s story tell us about the US army in 1919? What were the senior officers in his division afraid of, and how would their leadership be judged in today’s US military?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


IV. AMERICAN WOMEN AT WAR / Introduction by Jennifer D. Keene

1. What are we to make of the varied experiences related in the selections? Is there a “women’s experience of war”?

2. How much has changed since World War I in the roles that women play during times of national conflict? Is their support as essential on the home front as it was in World War I?

3. Does war act as a transformative force in women’s lives?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


V. THE HOME FRONT: SELLING UNITY, SUPPRESSING DISSENT / Introduction by Chad Williams

1. How did Justice Holmes defend the value of free speech? Do you find his arguments persuasive?

2. Are there legitimate political and moral limits to wartime dissent in a democratic society?

3. How do the efforts of the Wilson administration to win support for World War I compare with the attempts of more recent administrations to rally public opinion in wartime?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


VI. AMERICA ON THE WORLD STAGE / Introduction by Michael S. Neiberg

1. Should the United States try to promote democracy internationally?

2. Can the United States best serve its interests and preserve peace by acting through international organizations, or by maintaining its national sovereignty and the freedom to act unilaterally?

3. Was Wilson foolish or wise in trying to build an international order that did not rest upon the balance of power? Is it possible to have an international system that does not ultimately depend upon the use of force?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


VII. AT HOME/COMING HOME: THE TOLL OF WAR / Introduction by Jennifer D. Keene

1. Was the Great War a just and noble cause for the Americans who fought in it? Were America’s interests best served by fighting in World War I?

2. Did the use of conscription in World War I result in a more fair sharing of the burdens and sacrifice of war than the all-volunteer force of today?

3. How has the experience of returning from war changed in the last hundred years? What has remained the same?
Suggestions for further reading:


Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophie are shot to death in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on June 28 by Gavrilo Princip, a young Bosnian Serb. Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia, July 28. Russia orders full military mobilisation, July 30. Austria-Hungary orders full mobilisation, July 31.

Germany declares war on Russia, August 1. France orders full mobilisation, August 1. Germany invades Luxembourg, August 2, and Belgium, August 4. Britain declares war on Germany, August 4. President Woodrow Wilson proclaims American neutrality on August 4. Montenegro declares war on Austria-Hungary, August 5. Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia, August 6. France and Great Britain declare war on Austria-Hungary, August 12. Japan declares war on Germany, August 23. (Alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary becomes known as the Central Powers, and alliance of France, Russia, and Britain as the Entente or the Allies.)

Germans occupy Brussels, August 20. French and British are defeated in series of battles fought along the French frontiers, August 20–24.


Austro-Hungarians invade northwest Serbia, August 12, but are defeated and retreat across border, August 23.

British begin naval blockade of Germany as main body of German surface fleet remains in harbor, unwilling to risk battle with numerically superior British forces.

German troops in Togoland surrender to British and French forces, August 26. New Zealand, Australia, and Japan occupy German colonies in the Pacific, August 26–October 14.

French and British halt German advance in battle of the Marne, fought west of Paris, September 5–9. Germans withdrawn from the Marne to the Aisne River. Both sides move troops north toward the Channel coast.
Russians capture Lemberg (Lviv) in Austrian Galicia, September 3, and begin siege of Przemysl, September 24.


Austro-Hungarians launch second invasion of northwest Serbia, September 8.

British and French capture Douala, capital of Cameroon, September 27. (Last German garrison in Cameroon surrenders February 18, 1916.)

Germans begin series of attacks on Allied forces defending Belgian town of Ypres, October 19, in attempt to breakthrough to Channel ports of Dunkirk and Calais. Belgian army retreats to west bank of Yser River and floods lowlands between Nieuport and Dixmude.

Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia relieve siege of Przemysl, October 9.

Ottoman Empire enters war on October 29 as Turkish fleet bombards Russian ports in Black Sea.

Battle of Ypres ends November 22 as Germans fail to break through Allied defenses. Both sides entrench along Western Front, which runs for 475 miles from the North Sea coast to the Swiss border.

Siege of Przemysl resumes on November 6 as Austro-Hungarian armies in Galicia withdraw to the Carpathians.

Garrison at Tsingtao (Qingdao), German concession port in northern China, surrenders to Japanese, November 7, after six-week-long siege.


Fighting begins between Russians and Turks in the Caucasus, November 6. Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V declares jihad against the Allies, November 14, in unsuccessful attempt to foment rebellion among the Muslim populations of the British, French, and Russian empires. British and Indian troops occupy Basra in Mesopotamia, November 22.


Serbs launch counteroffensive, December 3–6, that re-
captures Belgrade on December 15 as Austro-Hungarian
forces are driven from Serbia.

Turks launch offensive in Caucasus, December 22, and
are defeated at Sarikamish, December 29–30.

1915

Sarikamish campaign ends, January 15, after Turks lose
two-thirds of their attacking force.

Germans announce on February 4 that Allied merchant
ships in war zone around Great Britain and Ireland will be
sunk by U-boats (submarines) without warning and that
neutral shipping should avoid entering the zone. Unre-
stricted U-boat campaign begins on February 18.

Germans defeat Russians in second battle of the Masur-
ian Lakes, February 7–22.

Anglo-French naval force begins bombarding Turkish
fortifications in the Dardanelles, February 19.

Russians capture 120,000 prisoners when garrison of
Przemyśl surrenders on March 22.

British impose total blockade on Germany, including all
food imports, March 11.

Anglo-French fleet loses three obsolete battleships to
mines in unsuccessful attempt to force passage of the
Dardanelles, March 18.

Germans launch offensive at Ypres, April 22, using poi-
sonous chlorine gas released from cylinders. Battle contin-
ues until May 25 as Germans gain ground but fail to
capture Ypres. (British begin using poison gas in Septem-
ber 1915.)

Turkish police arrest more than two hundred prominent
Armenians in Istanbul, April 24. (Evidence indicates that
in March 1915 the leadership of the Committee of Union
and Progress, which had ruled the Ottoman Empire since
1913, decided to remove the Armenian population of Anatolia
by deportation and mass murder.) British, Australian, New
Zealand, and French troops land on Gallipoli peninsula,
April 25, beginning land campaign to open the Darda-
nelles. Campaign becomes stalemated, with Allied forces
confined to shallow beachheads.

French launch new offensive in the Artois, May 9–June
18, supported by British attacks at Aubers Ridge, May 9,
and Festubert, May 15–25.

Germans and Austro-Hungarians break through Russian
lines between Gorlice and Tarnow in southeast Poland, May 2–4, and recapture Przemyśl, June 3, and Lemberg, June 22, as Russians retreat from Galicia.

Italy declares war on Austria-Hungary, May 23. Italian troops cross the Austrian border and advance to the Isonzo River with objective of seizing Trieste. In the first battle of the Isonzo, June 23–July 7, Italians fail to capture high ground east of the river. (Italians will launch four additional offensives in the Isonzo valley, July 1915–March 1916, that fail to break through Austro-Hungarian defenses.)

Ottoman authorities begin deportation of Armenians from Anatolia into the Syrian desert in May as mass killings are carried out by Kurdish tribesmen and criminal gangs recruited by the Special Organization, paramilitary group controlled by the Committee of Union and Progress. (By the summer of 1916 an estimated 800,000 to one million Armenians are killed, or die from hunger and disease, in the massacres and deportations, along with at least 150,000 Assyrian Christians.)

U-boat sinks British ocean liner Lusitania off the coast of Ireland on May 7, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. United States protests sinking on May 13 as an “unlawful and inhumane act.” Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan resigns on June 9, fearing that Wilson’s continued defense of the right of Americans to travel on belligerent ships will lead to war.

German air service deploys first fighter aircraft with forward-firing machine gun in July. (British and French will introduce equivalent aircraft into service by early 1916. From the beginning of the war all of the major powers use aircraft for reconnaissance and bombing raids; Germans also use Zeppelins for bombing and maritime reconnaissance.)

Germans and Austro-Hungarians launch new offensive, July 13, that forces Russians to retreat from Poland. German forces capture Warsaw, August 5. Austro-Hungarians capture Brest-Litovsk, August 26.

U-boat sinks British liner Arabic off Ireland, August 19, killing two Americans. Seeking to avoid American entry into war, Germans suspend unrestricted U-boat campaign, August 27, and pledge on September 1 not to sink passenger ships without warning.

German forces in South-West Africa (Namibia) surrender, July 9.
British troops land at Suvla Bay, August 6, as part of new attempt to break stalemate at Gallipoli. Offensive ends on August 15 with Turks still holding high ground and the Allies confined to their beachheads. French launch offensives in Champagne, September 25–November 6, and the Artois, September 25–October 16. Attack in the Artois is supported by British offensive at Loos, September 25–October 19.

Germans capture Vilna, September 18. Russian retreat ends in late September along line running from Gulf of Riga south to the Romanian border near Czernowitz (Chernivtsi).

British and Indian troops in Mesopotamia advance up Tigris and capture Kut, September 28.

French and British troops begin landing at Salonika, Greece, on October 5 in effort to aid Serbs. German and Austro-Hungarian forces invade Serbia from the north, October 7, and capture Belgrade, October 9. Bulgaria invades Serbia from east, October 14. Serbian army begins winter retreat across mountains into Montenegro and Albania, November 24. (Survivors are evacuated from the Adriatic coast by Allies, January–April 1916, and later join Allied forces at Salonika.)

British begin advance up Tigris toward Baghdad, November 19, but fail to breakthrough Turkish defenses at Ctesiphon (Salman Pak), November 22–25, and retreat to Kut. Turks begin siege of Kut, December 7. Allies begin evacuation of Gallipoli in mid-December.

1916

Allied evacuation of Gallipoli is completed, January 8. Austro-Hungarians invade Montenegro, January 5, and complete occupation of the country, January 25. Russians begin offensive in the Caucasus, January 10, and capture Erzurum, February 16.

Germans begin offensive at Verdun, February 21, and capture Fort Douaumont, key French position, February 25, but are unable to breakthrough inner defensive line. Fighting extends to left (west) bank of the Meuse, March 6, as Germans continue offensive intended to exhaust French army in battle of attrition.

Germany declares war on Portugal, March 9, after the Portuguese government seizes interned German ships.

Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa raids Columbus,
New Mexico, on March 9, killing eighteen Americans. Wilson sends military expedition led by General John J. Pershing into Mexico in pursuit of Villa, March 15 (expedition ends in early February 1917 without Villa being captured).

U-boat torpedoes French passenger ship Sussex in the English Channel, March 24, injuring several Americans. Wilson warns Germany on April 18 that the U.S. will break diplomatic relations if attacks on passenger ships continue. German government pledges on May 4 that it will abide by established rules of naval warfare, which require that the passengers and crew of a ship be placed in lifeboats before it is sunk.

Allied forces begin offensive in German East Africa, April 3. (Fighting extends into Portuguese East Africa and Northern Rhodesia in 1917–18 before last German forces surrender on November 25, 1918.)

Irish republicans begin Easter Uprising in Dublin, April 24. Insurrection is suppressed by British troops, April 29.

Russians capture Trabzon, Turkish Black Sea port, on April 18. British garrison at Kut surrenders, April 29.

American volunteer pilots fly first patrol with Escadrille N. 124, French fighter squadron later known as the Lafayette Escadrille, May 13.

Sykes-Picot agreement, ratified May 16, divides postwar Middle East into zones of British and French direct control and indirect influence while envisioning international zone in Palestine under British, French, and Russian administration. (The borders established in Middle East during the 1920s do not follow boundaries outlined in Sykes-Picot agreement.)


German fleet sails into North Sea on May 31 in attempt to engage British fleet on favorable terms. In battle of Jutland, May 31–June 1, British lose three battle cruisers, three armored cruisers, eight destroyers, and 6,000 men killed, while Germans lose one battle cruiser, one obsolete battleship, four light cruisers, five destroyers, and 2,500 men killed. British retain control of North Sea and continue blockade.

Russian offensive in Galicia, June 4, breaks through
Austro-Hungarian lines and captures 200,000 prisoners by June 12. Germans make final attempt to capture Verdun, June 23.

Arab revolt against Ottoman rule begins in the Hejaz, June 10.

British and French begin offensive along Somme River, July 1, after week-long preliminary bombardment.

In sixth battle of the Isonzo, August 6–17, Italians succeed in capturing Gorizia. (Italians will launch another four offensives along the Isonzo, September 1916–June 1917, that make limited gains in the high ground east of the river.) Italy declares war on Germany, August 28.

Romania declares war on Austria-Hungary, August 27, and invades Transylvania. German, Bulgarian, and Turkish forces invade southern Romania, September 2. Germans and Austro-Hungarians begin counteroffensive in Transylvania, September 25.

British use tanks for the first time with limited success on the Somme, September 15. Russian offensive in Galicia ends, September 20. French counteroffensive at Verdun recaptures Fort Douaumont, October 24.

Wilson wins reelection on November 7, defeating Republican Charles Evans Hughes.

Battle of the Somme ends, November 18, with a maximum Allied advance of seven miles. British lose 420,000 men killed, wounded, or missing, while French casualties total 200,000; German casualties are estimated at 430,000.

Franz Joseph, emperor of Austria since 1848, dies on November 21 and is succeeded by his nephew Karl.

Herbert Henry Asquith, prime minister of Great Britain since 1908, resigns on December 5, and is succeeded by David Lloyd George. Germans capture Bucharest, December 6, as Romanian army retreats north into Moldavia. French counteroffensive at Verdun, December 15–18, regains much of the ground lost earlier in the year. French lose 377,000 men killed, wounded, or missing in battle, while German casualties total 337,000.

1917 Decision by German military and naval leadership to resume unrestricted U-boat warfare is endorsed by Kaiser Wilhelm II on January 9.

Wilson calls for “peace without victory” in address to the Senate, January 22.
Unrestricted U-boat warfare resumes, February 1. United States breaks diplomatic relations with Germany, February 3. Text of Zimmerman telegram, diplomatic message proposing a German-Mexican alliance against the United States, is published on March 1.

Germans shorten their line in France by withdrawing 12–25 miles to “Hindenburg Line,” strongly fortified position, March 16–18.

British retake Kut, February 25, and occupy Baghdad, March 11.

Food riots in Petrograd (St. Petersburg), March 8–12, result in mutiny by city garrison. Tsar Nicholas II abdicates, March 15, as provisional government is established with Prince Lvov as prime minister.

Wilson asks Congress on April 2 to declare war against Germany. War resolution is approved by the Senate, 82–6, on April 4 and by the House, 373–50, on April 6. (U.S. army has 127,000 officers and men, with another 80,000 men in the National Guard on federal service.)

British begin offensive at Arras on April 9. Canadian troops capture Vimy Ridge, April 9–12. Battle continues until May 16 as British are unable to exploit initial success; British casualties total 150,000 killed, wounded, or missing.

French launch offensive against Chemin des Dames, high ground north of the Aisne, on April 16 that fails to achieve breakthrough. Offensive ends on May 16 after French lose 130,000 men killed, wounded, or missing. Failure of attack cause widespread protests and unrest in French army, with many soldiers refusing to engage in further attacks. French commanders restore order by improving leave conditions and avoiding costly attacks.

General Pershing is appointed commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), May 10. Wilson signs Selective Service Act, May 18, making men twenty-one to thirty eligible for the draft (registration is extended in September 1918 to men eighteen to forty-five).

British capture Messines ridge south of Ypres, June 7–14.

Wilson signs Espionage Act, June 15, that includes penalties for attempts to incite “disloyalty” in the armed forces or to obstruct enlistments.

White mobs attack black residents of East St. Louis, Illinois, July 2–3, during rioting that kills at least thirty-nine African Americans and nine whites.


Germans begin using mustard gas, a liquid blistering agent, in Flanders, July 12. (Allies will begin using mustard gas in June 1918. Poison gas causes death of an estimated 90,000 soldiers on all sides, 1915–18.)

British launch offensive at Ypres, July 31, after fifteen-day preliminary bombardment.

U-boats sink almost 4.4 million tons of shipping, February–August 1917. (Germans had sunk 4.2 million tons, August 1914–January 1917.) Sinkings begin to decline as British gradually adopt convoy system, aided by increasing numbers of U.S. destroyers made available for escort duty.

Italians capture Bainsizza plateau northeast of Gorizia in eleventh battle of the Isonzo, August 19–September 12.

Germans capture Riga, September 3.

Germans and Austro-Hungarians launch offensive at Caporetto on the upper Isonzo, October 24, and force the Italians to retreat sixty miles to the Paive River. Italians lose 280,000 men taken prisoner, while another 350,000 men become stragglers or desert.

Third battle of Ypres (also known as battle of Passchendaele) ends, November 10, with maximum Allied advance of four miles; British lose 244,000 killed, wounded, or missing, the Germans 215,000. Georges Clemenceau becomes premier of France, November 16. British break through Hindenburg Line at Cambrai, November 20, in surprise attack using more than 300 tanks. German counteroffensive on November 30 recovers much of the lost ground.

British break through Turkish defenses at Gaza, November 1–6, and advance into Palestine. Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour issues declaration on November 2 committing British government to “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” British occupy Jerusalem, December 9.

U.S. declares war on Austria-Hungary, December 7. Congress proposes Eighteenth Amendment, establishing prohibition, to the states, December 18.

1918

Wilson outlines terms of peace settlement in Fourteen Points address to Congress, January 8.

Bolsheviks sign peace treaty with Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk, March 3.

Outbreak of Spanish influenza in Kansas in early March spreads across the United States and travels overseas.

Germans launch offensive against British at St. Quentin, March 21–April 5, and advance up to forty miles. Attack is most successful on Western Front since 1914, but fails to capture railroad junction at Amiens. Allies lose 255,000 men killed, wounded, or captured, the Germans 240,000. French general Ferdinand Foch becomes first Allied supreme commander on the Western Front, April 3. Germans break through British defenses along Lys River south of Ypres, April 9–29, but fail to capture supply center at Hazebrouck.

Romania signs peace treaty with Central Powers at Bucharest, May 7.

Wilson signs Sedition Act, May 16. (The Wilson administration will prosecute 2,168 individuals for their speeches or writings under the Espionage and Sedition acts and obtain 1,055 convictions; forty-one defendants are sentenced to terms of ten, fifteen, or twenty years.)

Germans launch third spring offensive, May 27–June 4, breaking through French lines along the Aisne River and advancing to the Marne. American troops join French in defense of Marne crossing at Château-Thierry, June 1–3, and drive Germans from Belleau Wood, June 6–25.


During final German offensive, July 15–18, Americans fight with the French along the Marne, then join counter-offensive that advances to Aisne and Vesle rivers in early August.

British launch offensive at Amiens, August 8–12, that captures 12,000 prisoners in its first day.

American troops land at Russian Pacific port of Vladivostok, August 16, and Arctic port of Archangel, September
4. (Troops are sent to guard military supplies and railroads and to assist Czechoslovak forces that seek to leave Russia and fight with the Allies.)

New and more virulent strain of Spanish influenza arrives in United States in late August. (Influenza pandemic of 1918–19 kills an estimated 675,000 Americans and at least thirty million people worldwide.)

In its first operation as an independent army under Pershing’s command, the AEF eliminates the St. Mihiel salient southeast of Verdun, September 12–16, capturing 13,000 prisoners. Allies begin general offensive, September 26–29, attacking in Flanders, Picardy, and Champagne. AEF launches Meuse-Argonne offensive, September 26.

French, British, Serbian, and Greek forces begin offensive in Macedonia, September 15, and advance up the Vardar valley. Bulgaria signs armistice, September 29.

Eugene V. Debs, four-time Socialist candidate for president, is tried in Cleveland under the Espionage Act of 1917 for having made an antiwar speech in June 1918. Convicted on September 13, he is sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

British forces capture Damascus, October 1.

British break through Hindenburg Line, September 29–October 5. Prince Max of Baden, the newly-appointed German chancellor, sends note to Wilson on October 5 asking for an armistice and peace negotiations on basis of the Fourteen Points. Americans break through main defensive line in the Meuse-Argonne, October 14–17. German navy orders U-boats to end attacks on civilian ships, October 21. (Germans sink 4.1 million tons of merchant shipping, September 1917–October 1918; 178 U-boats are lost at sea, 1914–18.) American troops in Europe total 2,057,000.

Ottoman Empire signs armistice, October 30. Italian victory in battle of Vittorio Veneto, October 24–November 3, brings about collapse of Austro-Hungarian army. Austria-Hungary signs armistice, November 3. Allies launch series of attacks along the Western Front, October 31–November 4. Wilhelm II abdicates his throne, November 9, as German republic is proclaimed in Berlin. Germans sign armistice that goes into effect on November 11 at 11 A.M.

Czechoslovak republic proclaimed in Prague, November
Independent Polish state proclaimed in Warsaw, November 16.

Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes proclaimed in Belgrade, December 1. American occupation forces enter Germany, December 1, and cross the Rhine, December 13. Wilson sails for France on December 5 to attend peace conference.


Last American troops leave France, January 3. (American occupation of Germany ends in January 1923.) Soviet Russia signs treaties recognizing Estonian, Lithuanian,
and Latvian independence, February 2–August 11. Senate votes 49–35 to ratify Versailles treaty with reservations, March 19, falling seven votes short of the necessary two-thirds majority. (Austrian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian treaties all incorporate the League of Nations covenant, and are never submitted to the Senate for ratification.) Last U.S. troops leave Vladivostok, April 1. At conference held in San Remo, Italy, April 19–26, British and French agree that France will receive League of Nations mandate for Syria (including Lebanon) and Britain will receive mandates for Iraq and Palestine (including territory that becomes Transjordan in 1923). Peace treaty with Turkey is signed at Sèvres, August 10. (United States is not a signatory to the Sèvres treaty, which is replaced by Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.) Ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment is completed, August 18. Poland and Lithuania sign peace treaty, October 7. Warren G. Harding, Republican senator from Ohio, defeats James M. Cox, Democratic governor of Ohio, in presidential election on November 2. Eugene V. Debs, who is still in federal prison, receives more than three percent of the popular vote. (Debs is released on December 25, 1921, after Harding commutes his sentence.)

1921 Poland and Soviets sign treaty in Riga, March 18, ending their 1919–20 war. Harding signs congressional resolution ending state of war with Germany, Austria, and Hungary, July 2. United States signs separate peace treaties with Austria, August 24, Germany, August 25, and Hungary, August 29. Harding dedicates Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, November 11.

More than 116,000 Americans died while serving in the armed forces during World War I; of these deaths, 53,000 were the result of hostile action and 63,000 were from non-combat causes. Battle deaths by service were approximately 50,500 in the army, 400 in the navy, and 2,500 in the marines; 26,000 of the battle deaths were men killed in the Meuse-Argonne campaign (September 26–November 11, 1918). It is estimated that 46,000 of the non-combat deaths were from influenza.

Great Britain and Ireland lost 744,000 military dead; India, 74,000; Australia, 62,000; Canada, 57,000; New Zealand, 18,000; South Africa, 7,000; and Newfoundland,
France lost 1,400,000 military dead, including 70,000 from its colonies; Russia, 1,800,000; Italy, 650,000; Romania, 336,000; Serbia, 278,000; and Belgium, 38,000. Germany lost 2,000,000 military dead; Austria-Hungary, 1,200,000; the Ottoman Empire, 770,000; and Bulgaria, 87,500. About 15,000 African soldiers died on both sides in African campaigns, along with an estimated 150,000 porters and laborers, mostly from disease and malnutrition. The total number of military dead from 1914 to 1918 is estimated at more than 9 million, while total civilian deaths from violence and war-related food shortages and epidemics (excluding the 1918 influenza pandemic) are estimated at 6 million, including 2,100,000 in the Ottoman Empire and 1,500,000 in Russia.
Biographical Notes


**Willa Cather** (December 7, 1873–April 24, 1947) Born in Back Creek Valley, near Winchester, Virginia, daughter of a sheep farmer. Parents and other relatives moved to the Nebraska Divide in 1883, ultimately settling in Red Cloud. Attended University of Nebraska, where she studied Greek, Latin, French, German, and English literature; graduated 1894. Published poetry and short fiction and began contributing reviews to *The Nebraska State Journal*. Worked in Pittsburgh as a magazine editor and reviewer for Pittsburgh *Leader*, and later as high school Latin teacher. Published poetry collection *April Twilights* (1903) and story collection *The Troll Garden* (1905). Moved to New York in
1906 as editor of *McClure’s Magazine*; subsequently spent time in Boston and London, and frequently returned to Nebraska. First novel *Alexander’s Bridge* published in 1912, followed by *O Pioneers!* (1913), *The Song of the Lark* (1915), and *My Ántonia* (1918). Traveled extensively in Southwest. Toured French battlefields to research novel *One of Ours* (1922), inspired by cousin G. P. Cather, who was killed at Cantigny in 1918. Later novels included *A Lost Lady* (1923), *The Professor’s House* (1925), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1931), *Lucy Gayheart* (1935), and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), along with story collections *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1920), *Obscure Destinies* (1932), and *The Old Beauty and Others* (1945). Died in New York City.


**James Norman Hall** (April 22, 1887–July 5, 1951) Born in Colfax, Iowa, the son of a farmer and grocer. Graduated from Grinnell College in 1910. Worked for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Boston while studying for a master’s degree at Harvard. While on vacation in England at the outbreak of World


followed by novels *The Torrents of Spring* and *The Sun Also Rises* in 1926. After divorce from his first wife, married Pauline Pfeiffer in 1927. Returned to United States in 1928, settling in Key West in 1930. Subsequent fiction included *Men Without Women* (1927), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *Winner Take Nothing* (1933), and *To Have and Have Not* (1937); also published *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), about bullfighting, and *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935), about big game hunting. Covered Spanish Civil War as correspondent for North American Newspaper Alliance, 1936–37, an experience that helped inspire novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Settled in Cuba, 1939–40. After divorce from second wife, married war correspondent Martha Gellhorn in 1940 and traveled with her to China as correspondent for *PM*, 1941. War correspondent in northwest Europe for *Collier’s*, May 1944–March 1945. After divorce from third wife, married former war correspondent Mary Welsh in 1946. Published *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). Won Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. Committed suicide in Ketcham, Idaho.


Charles R. Isum (May 22, 1889–March 6, 1941) Born in California. Worked as bookbinder for the *Los Angeles Times*. Drafted into army and was assigned to the medical detachment of the 1st Battalion, 365th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Division. In June 1918 his regiment arrived in France, where it held the St. Die sector of the Lorraine front, August–September. Regiment was kept in reserve during opening of the Meuse-Argonne offensive before being sent to Marbache Sector along the Moselle in October. Served in battalion aid station at Pont-à-Mousson under heavy artillery fire, November 5–10, before being sent to Lesménils, where he was gassed on the night before the Armistice. Threatened with court-martial in January 1919 for violating order forbidding black soldiers from speaking with French women, but charges were dropped, and Isum was honorably discharged in March 1919. Returned to Los Angeles and job at the *Times*. Married Zellee Jones. Returned to work in 1930s as heart condition linked to wartime gassing worsened. Daughter Rachel, born 1922, began studying nursing in 1940 at UCLA, where she met star athlete Jackie Robinson and introduced him to her father shortly before his death. (Rachel Isum and Jackie Robinson married in 1946, the year before he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers.)


Algernon Lee (September 15, 1873–January 5, 1954) Born in Dubuque, Iowa, the son of a carpenter. Attended University of Minnesota,


**Horace Pippin** (February 22, 1888–July 6, 1946) Born West Chester, Pennsylvania; grew up in Goshen, New York. Developed love of drawing and painting in childhood. Worked at various jobs including hotel porter, furniture crater, and iron molder. Joined the army in 1917 and was sent to France as part of 369th Infantry (“Harlem Hellfighters”), keeping an illustrated journal of his military experiences. Was badly wounded in the right shoulder near Séchault on September 30, 1918 losing the full use of his right arm. Received Croix de Guerre. Returned to United States in 1919 and settled in West Chester, living on odd jobs and his disability pension. Married Jennie Wade in 1920. Resumed activity as an artist, executing oil paintings using his left hand to assist his injured right arm; the first of these, “The End of the War: Starting Home” (c. 1930) took over three years to complete. His work, focused on historical and political themes and scenes of African-American life, attracted local attention and was championed by painter N. C. Wyeth. Began exhibiting in galleries and major museums including the Carlen Gallery (Philadelphia), the Corcoran Gallery.


Ashby Williams (June 18, 1874–May 31, 1944) Born John Ashby Williams in Stafford County, Virginia, the son of a farmer. Family moved to Washington, D.C., in 1892. Worked as clerk in government hydrographic office in Norfolk, Virginia, 1898–1901. Attended Oberlin College, 1901–3, and the University of Virginia, 1903–6, where he was awarded a law degree. Practiced law in Roanoke, Virginia, where he served on the board of aldermen, 1908–12. Published *Corporation Laws of Virginia* (1909), an annotated compilation. Married Eva Wallbridge in 1911. Arrived in France in May 1918, commanding Company E, Second Battalion, 320th Infantry Regiment, 80th Division. Trained behind British lines, June–July, and then served in trenches near Ransart, southwest of Arras, July–August. Assigned command of First Battalion, 320th Infantry Regiment, on August 28; led battalion at St. Mihiel and in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Returned to the United States in May 1919 as lieutenant colonel. Published *Experiences of the Great War: Artois, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne*.