

MEMORY IN WORLD WAR I AMERICAN MUSEUM EXHIBITS

by

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Abstract

As the world enters the centennial of World War I, interest in this war is reviving. Books, television shows, and movies are bringing the war into popular culture. Now that all the participants of the war have passed away a change is occurring in American memory. The transition from living to non-living memory is clearly visible in museums, one of the main ways history is communicated to the public. Four museums are studied in this paper. Two exhibits built in the 1990s are in the 1st Infantry Division Museum at Fort Riley, Kansas, and the Chemical Corps Museum in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The other two exhibits are newer and are the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri and the Cantigny 1st Infantry Division Museum in Wheaton, Illinois. Findings reveal that exhibits become more inclusive over time to civilian bodies, wounded bodies, and the specific image of “Americans killing Germans bodies.” However, even though there is change some things are turning into myths. The icon of the American soldier as a healthy and strong man willing to sacrifice his life for the country is still a major theme throughout all the exhibits. Finally, there are several myths that America has adopted from its allies. The icons of the bandages over the eyes from the chemical attacks and the horrors of the trenches are borrowed, to a certain extent, from America’s allies. The Americans were only in the war for a limited time and borrowed cultural memories to supplement their own. The examination of the four museums is important because this transition will happen again and soon. Museums must be conscious of the changes occurring during this transition in order to confront the challenges.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband who makes this all possible.

Introduction

Museums operate at a focal point in the conflict between history and memory. By definition, museums house and interpret historical artifacts for the general public. But those artifacts are of interest to the public precisely because they tend to concern events that the public “remembers.” Complications therefore arise when exhibits argue for historical interpretations that seem to conflict with the popular memory of an event, particularly if actual participants in the event are still alive. The history of museum exhibits is marked by a number of fierce controversies over this complication, and in more than a few cases, museum curators have been forced to bow to the pressures of the public’s memory of an event.¹

The centennial of the beginning of World War I is a particularly interesting opportunity to study how museums confront the problem of history versus memory. Not only is there renewed interest in the war, but with the death of the last soldier of the Great War in 2012 (at age 110), the centennial also marks the moment in which all participants in that war are now gone, the moment in which “living” memory has officially passed completely into non-living memory. The question that this thesis confronts is the question of how, or whether, this passage of time has affected the displays in World War I museum exhibits. Specifically, this study will look at what changes, if any, can be observed in World War I museum exhibits as these institutions have been freed from the potential demands of participant memory. After examining the four museums it became clear that cultural memory

¹ The most recent example in the United States was the ferocious public outcry over the Smithsonian’s proposed exhibit at the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. See Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 64.

plays a significant role in museums and the reinforcement of a shared American cultural identity.

Four American museums were chosen for this study. Two are military museums: the 1st Infantry Division Museum at Fort Riley, Kansas, and the Chemical Corps Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Two private museums were also chosen: the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, and the WWI exhibit at the First Infantry Division Museum in Cantigny Park, Illinois. The scripts for all the museum exhibits were written at different times in the transition from living memory to non-living memory. The exhibits were current to the period from September 2012 to May 2014 when this work was being completed. The oldest exhibit is at the 1st Infantry Division Museum. The script was written in the 1990s with a few updates and artifact rotations throughout the years. However, the core of the exhibit is over twenty years old. The Chemical Corps Museum exhibits also date back to the 1990s. Renovations to the World War I script occurred in 2003 and again in 2012. At the First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny, the main exhibit was created in 1992. The main exhibit hall was updated in 2000 and the display cases changed in 2012. The most current exhibit in total, not just with minor updates, is the National World War I Museum. The entire museum was completely renovated and re-opened in 2006. The scripts for the four museums therefore stretch over a twenty-year period. During this time World War I started shifting from living to non-living memory. At the time the oldest scripts were written, the veterans who were still alive were in their nineties or centenarians. However, their presence still loomed large for the museums. For example, in 2008 the National World War I Museum hosted Frank Buckles (who was then 107), the last living American veteran

from World War I, at a special Memorial Day celebration.² Tracing the timeline of when the museum exhibits were built over this twenty year period will show the changes that have taken place to the historical narratives presented in each museum.

As this study will demonstrate, changes in museum scripts are affected by a number of factors. One factor, as mentioned above, is the potential demand to feature scripts that do not directly contradict the memory of participants, a demand that has clearly lessened over the twenty years of scripts detailed in this study.

Participant memory is only one layer of the factors that determine museum scripts. As the historiography of an event changes, curators experience the pressures to include the most accurate historical knowledge of the event: for World War I, that has meant the question of whether or not the exhibits include a broader array of sources since current historiography has focused much more on the social impact of the war and now includes many more civilian voices. The question is whether the exhibits recognize this change.

Another layer of investigation concerns the question of how World War I museums confront the reality of the war itself. World War I consisted of violence and death on an industrial scale. The question is whether the curators of these museums, given their differing institutional mandates and their inevitable concerns about “good taste,” confront this reality.

Finally, there is a layer of interpretation that is particular to American museums, one that raises numerous questions about the line between history and memory, or even, between historical fact and myth. For Europeans, the war dragged on for four years, while Americans

² National World War I Museum, "Museum and Memorial: Built by Kansas Citizens, Embraced by the Nation," Last modified 2013, Accessed October 17, 2013, <http://theworldwar.org/explore/museum-and-memorial>.

were directly involved for only the last nineteen months of the conflict and took part in combat on a substantial scale for only six months of that period. This difference is so great that, to this day, the Great War occupies a far greater place in European commemorations than is, or ever was, the case in the United States. For example, every year in England, there is a two minute observance of silence at the Cenotaph in London. The silence on Remembrance Sunday honors all the soldiers who died during the Great War and is still considered by the nation to be an extremely important aspect of English culture.³ In addition, there are memorials in virtually every town and village in the country as well as numerous museums about the war. Among those museums, the most important is the Imperial War Museum in London. The museum is generally considered one of the best historical museums in the world. It was founded in 1917 as the National War Museum and renamed in 1918. The museum was created by the British War Cabinet to house objects, documents, and testimony from the Great War. Over the years the museum has expanded to include wars in the 20th and 21st centuries in which the British Commonwealth participated. The exhibits were recently renovated and reopened in July 2014.⁴ The images of the British experience are so vivid that they have become, for many Americans, the central images of World War I. In this regard, the question asked by this study is whether the European experience of the war has so influenced American understanding that the four museums studied have in fact “borrowed” European, and particularly British, experiences of the war and presented them as part of the American experience. Have British memories become American myths?

³ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 337.

⁴ "Transforming IWM London," January 1, 2014, Accessed November 8, 2014, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-london/transforming-iwm-london>.

To be clear, myths in this paper are not defined as “lies” or “untruths.” Myths are symbols and stories that are used to simplify complex pasts to ease communication.⁵ Dan Todman argues in his fascinating book *The Great War: Myth and Memory* that myths are a kind of streamlined understanding. He suggests that “...each time we refer to a huge historical event like the Great War, we develop myths which sum up what is commonly supposed to have happened and which we can rely on others understanding... myths in themselves are not a bad thing; they are a necessary part of human society and they can function for the good or ill.”⁶ Another aspect of myth-making that this study explores is the way in which each of these museums present the American soldier. Are American soldiers presented in all their diversity? Are all aspects of their experience in the war, including death, disease, and dishonor, portrayed? Or do these museums favor an iconic soldier: one who is forever young, robust, and always victorious?

In the four American museums researched in this paper the answer is not simple, but multilayered. Unsurprisingly, as temporal distance from the war grows change occurs. Museums become more inclusive of new interpretations such as including civilian voices and showing certain aspects of violence. However, while certain interpretations change, other aspects of the narrative become embedded in myth. The American soldier is an icon in all four museums. The bodies of these soldiers are predominantly shown as robust and heathy. The dead are commemorated to the point where almost no killed American soldiers are shown in any of the museums.

⁵Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), xiii.

⁶ Todman, xiii.

All of these layers show that museums are a battlefield where memory and history are constantly negotiated. This study is important because it raises questions on what a museum does. The average person expects a museum to be based in history with well researched and informative exhibits. However, the average person probably does not notice the presence of cultural memory. They may not notice how the memory promotes “Americanism” by portraying U.S. soldiers as strong men who help their allies win wars and spread democracy. It appears that museums are also trying to answer the question about who we are as a nation through these memories. Museum professionals need to be aware of how cultural memory affects the museum exhibits and in turn the museum strengthens the memory.

Chapter One continues to examine the theoretical and historiographical debates that are relevant to this thesis. First is an overview of memory and history. Next is an in depth analysis of how memory and museums are intertwined in the formation of a national identity. Multiple works are examined that are historiographically relevant to the topic of World War I museums, memory, and myth. Finally, a historiographical examination of the American Expeditionary Force’s role in World War I is studied. This is relevant because the AEF is the main focus of the four World War I museums.

Chapter Two will present a brief history of each museum and how it has changed since its inception. It will then compare the written mission statements among the four museums and examine how the curators interpret these statements. A study of the individual museum’s intended audience is very important in understanding the focus of the exhibits. In order to understand how the museum is managed it is important to understand the staff. Their backgrounds, personally and professionally, all contribute to how they interpret World War I.

Finally, the organization that runs the museum, be it government or a foundation, must be thoroughly examined to understand each museum's interpretation of World War I.

Chapter Three examines the changes that have occurred in the four museums as the exhibits have shifted from living memory to non-living memory. An examination of how, or if, the exhibits have become more inclusive of the latest historical work that emphasizes civilian participation is detailed. In addition, this chapter examines the question of how violence – and bodies – are handled in the exhibits. The extent to which the carnage of war is displayed is a central question.

Chapter Four looks at how some memories about World War I are unaffected by the shift into nonliving memory and form as American myths. In particular, the question of how healthy American bodies are depicted is central. The question of the memorialization of the American dead is also addressed.

Finally, Chapter Five examines several memories in the American historical consciousness that are influenced by British memories of World War I in particular. Of central interest is the question of how American museums deal with the idea of “the trenches,” an experience that was certainly relevant, but not truly central to the American experience of World War I. This final issue raises the question of what must be included in a World War I museum to demarcate it as an “authentic” World War I exhibit.

Chapter 1 - Memory and Museums

Museums are institutions caught between the demands of “history” and “memory.”

Museums are historical institutions, dedicated to the preservation of historical artifacts and documents. In addition, within their exhibits, museums provide analysis and interpretation of those artifacts. As such, they are guided by the processes of the historical discipline, which include sensitivity to the nuances of evidence and the possibilities of competing interpretations. But museums are also dedicated to exhibiting their artifacts in carefully plotted story lines intended for public consumption, and as such, they help both to create and to maintain public understanding of the events they exhibit. In doing so, as this research will show, museums are also subject to the pressures of fulfilling public expectations, as well as the demands of museum sponsors and donors, based on a cultural memory that may or may not be historically accurate.

“Cultural memory” is currently a much-debated term, but most historians of memory accept one of the earliest definitions from the German archaeologist Jan Assman:

The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.⁷

Certainly, American museum exhibits are part of that “body of reusable texts, images, and rituals.” Indeed, the creation of museums dedicated to the American past may be seen as a quite deliberate “cultivation” of America’s self-image. The challenge, however, is that they are not the only source of cultural memory and are frequently not the most dominant. For

⁷ Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique* 65 1995, 132.

most Americans, the rudiments of American history were first conveyed in schools, certainly in history classes but also in the reading of classic pieces of historical literature as well. In addition, Americans' understanding of "great events" may also have been formed by their own experience in those events, or by the experience of relatives and friends, conveyed in family stories. If one adds to that the omnipresence of popular culture in the form of movies, television, books, and music, it seems reasonable to conclude that most Americans are more likely to be carrying a version of history largely formed by sources outside the confines of academic history – or, by museum exhibits.

What matters here is that cultural memory is not as dependent on the demands of historical accuracy as the profession would like. As the classics scholar John Elsner puts it:

What matters ... is not that [a particular account of the past] be correct by our standards or anyone else's, but that it be convincing to the particular group of individuals ... for whom it serves as an explanation of the world they inhabit. ... [W]hat matters about any particular version of history is that it be meaningful to the collective subjectivities and self-identities of the specific group which it addresses.⁸

Because museums have public exhibitions as a central part of their mission, their exhibits inevitably must meet both the challenges of rigorous historical research, and less obviously, the "self-identities" of the groups that sponsor these exhibitions as well as those who witness them. Put another way: a museum exhibit whose interpretation strays too far from a dominant cultural memory, no matter how historically accurate, is likely to be a very controversial museum exhibit.

In the recent past, the most striking example of this problem for museums was the ill-fated Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in 1995.

⁸ Cornelius Holtorf, "Cultural Memory," University of Toronto, Accessed August 20, 2014. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/holtorf/2.0.html>.

Originally designed to display the restored Enola Gay on the 50th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb, the display ran into a ferocious fight when the exhibit's proposed script was released. Entitled "The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb and the Cold War," the script steered clear of any inclination to celebrate the plane as the vehicle that brought the end of a long and terrible war; there would be no message that the dropping of the bomb was an unambiguous moment of triumph. Rather, the Enola Gay was to be exhibited in the context of a narrative that probed the entire context of the Pacific War and its aftermath: it noted the rise of a vicious Japanese Empire, but also noted the racial tensions that set the Pacific War off from the European, portraying the fight against the Japanese as a "war of vengeance." Most pointedly, the exhibit was also to include a humanization of the Japanese who were the victims of the bombing by displaying artifacts from ground zero and "horrific photographs of the dead, dying, wounded, and those still suffering from radiation sickness."⁹

The firestorm that this proposed exhibit set off was perhaps predictable, with or without the charged political climate in which it occurred (the 1990s were noted for the strength of the so-called "culture wars"). Put simply, the exhibit defied too many tropes of American collective memory regarding World War 2: it did not portray the war unambiguously as "the Good War," and it conveyed sympathy for the Japanese victims of the bombing, which implied to some critics that the participation of the United States and Japan were "morally equivalent."¹⁰ It questioned the commonly held belief that the atomic bomb had saved as many as a million American lives that would have allegedly been lost in an invasion. The surviving crew members, particularly Paul Tibbets, the captain, were deeply

⁹ Linenthal and Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

insulted, believing that the script treated them as if they were war criminals. Quite simply, the script was seen as profoundly unpatriotic by surviving veterans. After a ferocious battle in which even the funding for the Smithsonian was threatened by donors, the controversial exhibit was stripped down by curators to simply a display of the fuselage of the Enola Gay itself, a complex exhibit reduced to the curation of a single notorious plane. The message for curators is clear: history is not the only force in play within museum walls.

In the case of the Enola Gay exhibit, one central difficulty for the curators was that World War 2 was still a central part of living memory. Many of those who objected so ferociously to the exhibit were those who spoke in what David Linenthal calls “a commemorative voice – ‘I was there, I know because I saw and felt what happened’” Perhaps the exhibit that the Smithsonian had in mind will be possible after the war passes completely into non-living memory. Cultural memory can and does change over time because cultural memory speaks in the language of its own time – how something is remembered in the “now.” Cornelius Holtorf in his piece examining cultural memory and ancient monuments finds that “cultural memory is not about giving testimony of past events, as accurately and truthful as possible, nor is it necessarily about ensuring cultural continuity: it is about making meaningful statements about the past in a given cultural context of the present.”¹¹ Each new present offers the possibility of alterations in cultural memory, just as each new present offers new historical interpretations.

The historian Tami Christopher provides an example of this phenomenon in her exploration of the hundred-year history of the “House of Seven Gables,” a museum in Salem, Massachusetts. The house was made famous by Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1851 novel of the

¹¹ Cornelius Holtorf, "Cultural Memory," University of Toronto, Accessed August 20, 2014. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/holtorf/2.0.html>.

same name. Christopher finds that, in the century since the house was acquired and turned into a museum, the tour scripts have been changed over time by curators to reflect current issues or interests, and in order to connect the visitor directly to the museum. At times, the exhibits have changed with new research that alters or even disproves previously held assumptions. However, these new ideas must “be acceptable to the intended audiences and culturally relevant before they become incorporated in the presentation of the site’s history.”¹² Those that are not acceptable create controversy or are even ignored until a later time. The example Christopher uses is how the topic of a secret stairwell in the house changed over time. In the original 1910 script it was only referenced in terms of the novel. In the next script dated around 1958, it was speculated that the staircase was intended as a storage area or even a possible hideaway from Indians or witches.¹³ In the 1995 script, these speculations were replaced with the argument that the 1830s owner of the house, Susannah Ingersoll, used the hidden stairwell to hide runaway slaves. Christopher suggests that tensions surrounding the Civil Rights movement prevented the writers from including the idea of the Underground Railroad in the 1958 script. By 1995, it was clear that such an inclusion would actually add to the interest in the tour. These changes in the script are particularly revealing because they do not reflect an actual change in the historical research: the hidden staircase apparently was added when the house was purchased in 1910 so that the layout of the house would better fit the novel. What it does reflect is that, at different times, different cultural memories may become more or less acceptable.

¹² Tami Christopher, “The House of Seven Gables: A House Museum’s Adaptation to Changing Societal Expectations Since 1910,” in *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin, (New York: Altmira, 2007), 74.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 69.

Another description of museum scripts changing over time can be found in Phyllis Leffler's article "Peopling the Portholes: National Identity and Maritime Museums in the U.S. and U.K." She compares English and United States maritime museums to see how they integrate newer social history covering topics such as race and gender. She then examines how they contribute to national identity. Leffler argues that "the different ways in which this has been carried out on both sides of the Atlantic reflects unique national identities, values, and even myths about national characteristics." In one of the cases in her study, she notes that the myths of "unfettered progress and opportunity" represented by the founding of the New York port were dismantled when the social histories of ordinary people were included. Doing so revealed the racial – and class – based inequalities of the port workers. In this case, the cultural memory was discredited by history and the new version remained – but perhaps only because the specific cultural memory itself was not central to American identity.¹⁴

Certainly, the American cultural memory of World War I is more central to American identity than a memory of the founding of the port of New York. But it seems apparent as well that World War I occupies a much smaller place in the current American imagination than does World War II. American involvement in the first war took place over a shorter length of time than did World War II, and perhaps more to the point, for the Americans the latter war was larger in its scope. In addition, with the death of the last World War I veteran in 2012, the last of the "commemorative voices" has been silenced. There is no one left to say, "I was there. This is what it was like."

¹⁴ Phyllis Leffler, "Peopling the Portholes: National Identity and Maritime Museums in the U.S. and U.K.," *The Public Historian*, 4 (2004): 23-48.

Despite the fact that World War I was not as central as other events in American history, it does occupy a distinct presence in popular culture including books, television shows, and movies. There are thousands of books with World War I as a subject, ranging from children's books to thick academic volumes that deal with every aspect of the war. Classic novels, most particularly *All Quiet on the Western Front*, have remained on student reading lists for decades. Poetry by soldiers including Wilfred Owen, Edward Thomas, and Ivor Gurney is famous for detailing the harshest aspects of the war. Non-fiction works such as Barbara Tuchman's popular history *The Guns of August* have become well known in their own right. These are just a few books that have made an impression in popular culture. There are thousands more that examine everything from women's roles to detailed movements on the battlefield.

World War I has also inspired television shows and movies. The movies *Wings* (1927) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) not only examine aspects of the war, but have also earned Academy Awards, the highest award in American cinema. Other movies such as *Flyboys* (2006), *War Horse* (2011) which was based on the 1982 children's novel, and *Gallipoli* (1981) are more modern interpretations; all were box office successes. Other films have dealt with the prewar climate and the transformations into the 1920s. A recent BBC series named *Peaky Blinders* (2013) follows a street gang in Birmingham, England, directly after the war. Several members of the gang have recently returned from the Great War and are dealing with shell shock. The enormously BBC drama popular *Downton Abby* (2010) follows a wealthy family through the changes of the late 19th century into the 20th century. The entire second season deals with the Great War and how it changes the world of Downton Abby.

Museums also have a place in the popular culture. However, the museum is more for people who have a desire to learn and experience history. They constitute a middle ground between books and movies. Books deeply explore a topic, while movies relay on “interpretation” of events that sometimes significantly alters fact. Museums do their best to both entertain and educate visitors. All of the books, television, and movies mentioned in this section are popular in the United States. They also have something else in common; almost all deal with the European experience of the war. There are very few exclusively American stories of the war that are imbedded in American popular culture. This is no doubt because most of the American popular culture impressions of World War I are imported from Europe, primarily England.

A good example of America cultural memory’s ties to the British experience is *War Horse*. The movie was adapted and directed by American filmmaker Stephen Spielberg. The cast was British and was filmed almost exclusively in England. However, the movie was released first in the United States and then a month later in England. The film follows the story of a horse throughout the war and its locations are focused on the horrors of trench warfare in Western Europe. The horrors of these trenches are in fact a major theme in American cultural memory of the war. The most obvious commonality in all four museums included in this study is that each museum has an “interactive trench” designed to immerse the visitor in the “experience” of war. Ironically, trenches were only a minor part of the American experience in World War I. Trench warfare was considerably more relevant to the British experience during the war. However, the image of trench warfare is so central to World War I memory that it is impossible to imagine an American exhibit that does not feature trenches, even if the historical reality of the American involvement in the 1918

counter-offensive is not adequately captured by that experience. It seems safe to argue that a World War I exhibit without trenches would not be perceived as being about World War I at all.

Cultural memory is further complicated by ideas brought forth by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur in his work *Memory, History, Forgetting*. He examines passive and active forgetting. “Escapist forgetting” can be both active and passive; according to Ricoeur, it is a “strategy of avoidance, that for its part is guided by an obscure desire not to know, not to be informed about, and not to inquire into atrocities committed in one’s own neck of the world.”¹⁵ Memories that are not considered relevant to the story are often discarded. A dishonorable act that does not fit into the commemoration of honor and heroism, nor does the “history of the conquerors.”¹⁶ This “escapist forgetting” is demonstrated in the four museums. While they teach, and portray, war, they also shy away from showing violence. They hint at its presence but avoid a direct confrontation. Several of the museums do this on purpose to deflect controversy. For example only one museum has an image of an American dead body, and it is so obscure that it is easy to miss. Understandably the curators also want the exhibits to achieve a certain level of taste and be child-appropriate. However, it does not explain why there are dead bodies of Germans or allies in the exhibits.

Valor and heroism are cornerstones of American cultural memory that are supported in the four museums. In the exhibits the American soldiers are placed in the context of a global conflict. Each museum features stories of an average American boy taking on a role bigger than his beginnings. They are shown training, marching, and storming the trenches in

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press , 2006), 479.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 480.

exhibits. New social history is integrated into the stories. Women and other minorities are also featured in the exhibits albeit only on the periphery. With the exception of the National World War I Museum, all the museums only have one display case or a single artifact that discusses different races and genders. The National Museum, with the most recent exhibits, makes an effort for its exhibits to have an appeal to all audiences and includes diverse stories. However, the main story is of these valorous men who saved the allies and helped win the war. There is minimal to no discussion about soldiers getting into trouble, contracting STDs, or committing dishonorable acts such as deserting. For example not a single example of desertion was mentioned in any of the four exhibits in this study. While desertion was less than in previous wars it is still part of military life. About 5,584 out of 4.3 million American men were charged with desertion and about a much larger number, 340,000, attempted to evade service.¹⁷ These exclusions seem to indicate that stories which directly contradict the overall portrayal of valor and sacrifice are simply ignored.

Historiography

This specific topic, examining how living and non-living memory collide in World War I Museums, is thus far unstudied. A relevant book is Gaynor Kavanagh's *Museums and the First World War: A Social History*. This is the only book focusing entirely on World War I Museums. She studies how museums in Britain changed because of World War I. Kavanagh starts with the museums' origins in the Victorian era and follows them through the four-year conflict. She then examines how they were affected by the war until 1930. She finds that museums were forced to adapt their exhibits as the war progressed. Initially

¹⁷ Fantina, 112; and Shaw, 187.

museum exhibits centered on “domestic propaganda.”¹⁸ Since museums were already a community institution the government used the museums to educate and inform the public about the war.¹⁹ As the war progressed graphic images of the violence on the battlefield became popular. Exhibit pictures became more explicit with detailed replicated trenches people could walk through and experience.²⁰ The museums wanted the average citizen to relate to the soldiers on the front lines. This changed in 1918 when the exhibits turned to a more hopeful tone as a way to inspire the home front.²¹ Kavanagh’s analysis of the exhibits is a great insight into the period and how museums change to reflect the needs of the time.

In the history community there is quite a bit of literature on the World War I memory, and myth. The majority of these are written about the British experiences of the war. The English were in the war far longer than the Americans. No one can talk about World War I and memory without looking at Paul Fussell’s landmark book *The Great War and Modern Memory*. He examines literature about the war and how it is “remembered, conventionalized, and mythologized”.²² He essentially argues that the reality of World War I shattered the language of war.²³ Fussell finds that a myth based on the trenches “has been assimilated so successfully...that it is not easy now to recover a feeling for the actualities.”²⁴ This myth is one of mud, misery, and death. Men were living in squalor as they listen to the enemy only

¹⁸ Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

²² Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), iv.

²³ Sidney Poger, "The Great War and Modern Memory," *Oral History Review*, 5 (1977): 68, <http://www.jstor.org.er.lib.k-state.edu/stable/pdfplus/3674893.pdf> (accessed December 14, 2012).

²⁴ Fussell, 43.

yards away. They are surrounded by barbed wire and the destroyed remnants of humanity. More recent books such as Dan Todman's *The Great War: Myth and Memory* examine the complex nuances in the intertwining of history, memory, and myth. He examines how myths persist about the Great War despite historians proving them inaccurate.²⁵ An example is how historians have shown that while the "losses were devastating, their greatest impact was socially and geographically limited" and that it was not a "fight about nothing."²⁶ J.M. Winter's book *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* examines the Great War as the turning point in the memory boom. He argues that there are many generations of memory starting with the survivors. Each generation in Britain shapes it in different ways.²⁷ All of these works are useful for examining World War I and memory. However, American memories of the war are distinct from that of their Allies.

Literature on the creation of museums examines how these institutions work with memory. Edward Linenthal's *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* follows the Holocaust Museum as it grew from the ground up. His goal was to show "the layers of struggle to define and delimit the ideas, objects, persons, and representations that best capture the meaning of the Holocaust."²⁸ This is a difficult task that is constantly changing. Directly after the war the memory of the Holocaust was almost exclusively Jewish. This changed when it was adopted by the national trust. At the same time the Jewish focus became more fully established, but also began to include others stories. He

²⁵ Todman, xii.

²⁶ Todman, xii.

²⁷ Jay Winter, *Remembering the War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 3.

²⁸ Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, (New York: Viking, 1995), 3.

argues that this is because of “the pluralistic ownership of the memory.”²⁹ In other words the memory is formed and owned by all the groups that experienced it. This allowed stories of gays and gypsies to become part of the narrative. The idea that memory could become more firmly established and still open to new narrative is directly related to the findings in this thesis. Also, the book examines the process of institutionalizing a historical event on a national scale. The results are similar to the National World War I Museum. There are some aspects of the narrative that are more inclusive and others that become deeper entrenched in myth.

Another examination of museums and memory is Amy Levin’s collection of essays *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*. The essays examine how different museums use of forms of “oral tradition, publications or collections of objects, the localized past is a vital component of the identity of the place.”³⁰ One of the articles is “Public History, Private Memory: Notes from the Ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, USA” by Eric Gable and Richard Handler. This particularly useful piece examines how history and memory interplay in reconstructed Williamsburg, Virginia. They argue that the museum transforms “public history into private memory by collapsing the distance between the reconstructed past...and the visitor’s touristic or familial experiences on the site.”³¹ Essentially the authors find that the line between history and memory is blurred within Colonial Williamsburg. The town was built to educate

²⁹ Ibid, 5.

³⁰ Amy Levin, *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 3.

³¹ Eric Gable and Richard Handler, “Public History, Private Memory: Notes from the Ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.A.,” *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 48.

visitors about American history and the founding of the nation. It is a big draw for families because it mixes theme park and history. The fort was rebuilt and the tour guides are dressed in period clothing. They interact with the visitors through speeches and answering questions. Everything, including the plants in the gardens, reflects the most accurate historical scholarship. Families bring their own knowledge of history and personal memories to the site. This can at times counteract what is in the museum. In interviewing visitors, the authors found that most talked about Williamsburg in relation to family memories or “consumer desire” or items they purchased in the gift shops.³² They generally do not talk about the memory that the museum is representing, which is centered on patriotism and national identity. However, the visitors’ memories are not in opposition to the history. Instead the museum’s desire for the visitors to truly “experience” Colonial Williamsburg encourages them to personalize this history into private memory.³³

J. Daniel d’Oney’s article, “Louisiana’s Old State Capitol Museum: Castle on the Mississippi,” examines how multiple voices play out in the exhibits and about ownership of history. D’Oney’s article examines the mission statement and an in-depth look at several of the exhibits. The author also talks with the staff and he finds they believe that “there is no such thing as ownership of culture, political or otherwise.”³⁴ This is important for the Louisiana area because it was a melting pot for many generations. If they exclude an important ethnic group or story it will cause controversy. This is similar to the way the National World War I Museum is attempting to integrate previously disenfranchised voices into the exhibits. However, the ownership of military museums is far more complex. In

³² Ibid., 60.

³³ Ibid., 60.

³⁴ Christopher, 78.

military museums the objects are “owned” by the military through regulations, not by the civilian population. Levin’s and Linenthal’s books are important in looking at how museums deal with their subject matter and audience.

Susan Crane’s *Museums and Memory* is an essential collection of essays for this thesis. The book explores how museums and memories shape each other. She argues that memory and historical museums are the sites of concepts that work well together. The collection of essays is focused through the lens of cultural studies because it encourages “interdisciplinary inquiry across the boundaries and intersections of established discourses...and to see the objects of study in a new light.”³⁵ This approach brings together a group of archeologists, historians, and anthropologists to examine the issue. They find that the museum and memory, “nexus” is an important place to explore the “production of cultural and personal knowledge.”³⁶

Another interesting article is Julia Adeney Thomas’ “History and Anti-History: Photography Exhibitions and Japanese National Identity.” In this article she examines the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography shortly after it was founded in 1995. Thomas finds that there is an absence of recent Japanese history portrayed in the museum. This gap in the museums conveys more about the Japanese culture than the curators intended. Thomas argues that the Japanese are actually “evading” their history in the exhibit.³⁷ This is a conscious effort by the curators who wish to separate the art from cultural or historical context. Thomas brings up several points about the importance of the curator in actually creating a history or denying it. Thomas’ example is a 1995 exhibit titled “-ism ’95: *The 1st*

³⁵ Crane, Susan. *Museums and Memory*. (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

Tokyo International Photo-Biennale.” This particular exhibit focused on fourteen artists that were chosen by a five-member international jury. The point of the exhibit was individuality and there was not supposed to be a cohesive theme. However, Thomas finds that despite the fervent denial of the curators, the artists “place their concerns within national narratives” of their subjects.³⁸ The curators are actively attempting to dissect the history from the exhibit. Only through her close analysis of the art does she find small connections to a historical context and none to the troubled modern Japan. Through this exhibit she finds that “curators can release images to function historically as points of references for the viewers’ engagement with the past, or they can highlight the qualities of these images in such a way that photographs fail to intersect with any dialectic between past and present.”³⁹ While she is specifically dealing with photography curators, her points can also be relevant to history curators.

Paula Findlen’s essay “Modern Muses: Renaissance Collecting and the Cult of Remembrance” in Crane’s book raises points about the importance of the collector to a museum’s reputation and its interpretation of history. This is relevant to the interpretation of the Cantigny Museum and how Robert R. McCormick guided what was included, and excluded, in the museum. In this article Findlen focuses on the creation of the museum during the Renaissance. At this time only the wealthy could own collections and exhibit them for members of their own class. Portraits of the collectors even became part of the display. This allowed the collectors to become immortal through their collections. More to the point,

³⁸ Julia Thomas, “History and Anti-History: Photography Exhibitions and Japanese National Identity,” in *Museums and Memory*, ed. Susan Crane, (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 100.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

since these collections began based on one person's interest, their interpretive framework is largely defined by that person.⁴⁰ As will be shown, the collection at Cantigny is still guided by its founder and original collector Robert R. McCormick, though he has been dead for six decades.

Another relevant article for this thesis is Greg Crysler's "Violence and Empathy: National Museums and the Spectacle of Society." He compares the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa. He also briefly examines the World Trade Center during the construction of the Memorial Museum. He finds that the "institutions seek to embody models of tolerant national citizenship in their visitors by immersing them in narratives of collective violence, death, and ultimately national rebirth."⁴¹ He argues that the exhibits and architectural design craft an "idealized models of citizenship" and attempt to separate the violent past with the nation state of the present.⁴² He begins by going through each museum and examining the exhibits. He makes a compelling case especially when he focuses on the end of the museums which transitions from the "black-and-white past into a full-color present."⁴³ The climax of both museums ends on a positive note about the future. His conclusions are compelling since they examine national identity and museums. He also acknowledges the "instability of memory" that poses a challenge to the museums. Both museums "impart knowledge through the simulated experiences of the suffering of others" by surrounding the "testimony with the aura

⁴⁰ Paula Findlen, "Modern Muses: Renaissance Collecting and the Cult of Remembrance" in *Museums and Memory*, ed. Susan Crane, (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 25.

⁴¹ Crysler, C. Greig, "Violence and Empathy: National Museums and the Spectacle of Society", *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* (Vol.17, No. 2 Spring 2006), 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

of authenticity” with film, photographs, oral histories, etc.⁴⁴ In doing so, the museums make the history feel “real enough to be remembered” and personally connect with the visitors.⁴⁵ This is difficult for the U.S. Holocaust Museum and Apartheid Museum since the majority of visitors do not have a direct connection to the events. However, survivors of both conflicts continue to maintain them as personal memories.

The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) has an extensive historiography of its own. The initial accounts of the American experience of the war are from General John J. Pershing’s memoirs. He was the leader of the AEF in World War I and was known as “Black Jack” for his lieutenant years with the tenth cavalry which was comprised of African American soldiers. In his book *My Experiences in the World War* Pershing uses his personal diaries and other documents to frame the book.⁴⁶ He focuses on his own experiences and the broad narrative of the war. Reviewers of his book show that he focuses mostly on the successes of the AEF and few of the failures.

In the 1960s historians such as Edward Coffman started to examine Pershing’s account of the World War I and question his story. Coffman’s book *War To End All Wars* is an essential revisionist survey that is a critical read for those researching the AEF. He discusses new topics such as African American service during the war, the role of objectors to the war, and the influence the war had on the US Army. One of the biggest influences was the start of serious schooling for army officers. He argues that “men lost their lives in World

⁴⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶ T.H Thomas, Review of *My Experiences in the World War*, by John J. Pershing. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Jan. 1932. <http://www.jstor.org.er.lib.k-state.edu/stable/pdfplus/1838244.pdf>.

War I because their officers had to learn in battle.”⁴⁷ Coffman does examine African American soldiers in the war. He points out that Pershing was not discriminatory about the men assigned to him, as long as he got the men he needed. Most of the African Americans served in cleaning or maintenance crews; however several groups saw combat. Edward Coffman also discusses Pershing’s preoccupation with creating a moral military force. Pershing’s main focus was on prostitution and venereal disease; he was less strict about alcohol. Primarily Coffman points out that the AEF was a flawed organization. However, he also helps to introduce new stories into the narrative of AEF history.

David Trask’s book *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918* and Paul Braim’s book *The Test of Battle: The American Expeditionary Forces in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign* complement each other in their criticism of the traditionalist arguments. Trask makes the point that his book looks at the AEF’s contribution in the context of the larger alliance. He argues that this is different from previous historians who examine the AEF in isolation. Trask believes that widening the lens shows the true colors of Pershing and is not flattering. He shows the fierce debates within the coalition about combining the AEF with the British and French army. He also shows how doubts surfaced in the Alliance about the effectiveness of the AEF. He quotes British Field-Marshal Haig, “What will history say regarding this action of the Americans leaving the British zone of operations when the decisive battle of the war is at its height, and the decision is still in doubt?” during the battle of St. Mihiel.⁴⁸ His revisionist history shows that Pershing’s account of history is flawed and

⁴⁷ Edward Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 362.

⁴⁸ David Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993), x.

that the AEF truly struggled in the war. Braim's book provides an important battle history of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign. In the book he shows the complications the AEF faced in battle. In an important section he shows how Pershing was slowly beaten down and lost his judgment. Pershing faced "Allied criticism and by his own driving ambition to succeed in breaking the strong German defenses, fighting the War Department for men and supplies, beset by wet and cold weather, tired and ill himself from the flu that was affecting the army."⁴⁹ This is a different view point from Pershing's portrayal of a clean victory.

Several historians argue that the Americans were essential for the Allies to defeat the Central Powers. One example is Gary Mead's *The Doughboys: America and the First World War*, in which he argues that it was the turbulent relationship between America and the rest of the Allies that led to a "myth that the final victory was due almost entirely to the heroic efforts of the British and French armies."⁵⁰ He argues that the myth came about because of antipathy between the Allies and the United States. The Allies wanted the United States to help them win the war, but on their terms. The United States refused to let their forces amalgamate into the existing Allied armies. Mead also argues that the AEF had significantly fewer casualties than the other Allies. This suggests that since the English and French suffered more losses they are more responsible for the eventual success of the war. Mead also argues that the war caused great hardship on domestic America. The economic strain of going to war so quickly, xenophobic violence, and the punishment of anti-war protesters "all

⁴⁹ Paul Braim, *The Test of Battle: The American Expeditionary Forces in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 129.

⁵⁰ Mead, Gary. *The Doughboys: America and the First World War*. (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2000), xi.

were fundamental blows to the painstakingly constructed democratic fabric of the nation.”⁵¹

On a side note, he even argues that these strains eventually led to the Great Depression.

However, despite all of these Mead argues that American participation was critical for winning the war with Germany especially by providing critical financial, economic, military and psychological support.⁵²

Mark Grotelueschen takes a more neutral position when it comes to AEF experience. In his book *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I*, he does not choose a side between the traditionalists and the revisionists. Instead he looks at the internal change of ideas and methods in the training and operations during the war. He examines how officers changed their ideas from “open warfare” at the beginning of the war to “trench warfare” by the end of the war. Originally Pershing hoped to drive the Germans out of the trenches and fight them in open warfare, but throughout the war the AEF learned how to fight effectively in the trenches. He concludes that the officers and enlisted men in the AEF managed to adapt new methods of war and technology against incredible odds. He even says that “the stunning aspect of the AEF’s experience [is that]...so many inexperienced officers and men (at all levels) and such new units (of all sizes) managed to continue fighting, learning, and often succeeding throughout their days, weeks, and months of horrific combat in a foreign land.”⁵³ In the end the historiography of the memory and American museums interplays with World War I is diverse and changes over time.

⁵¹ Ibid., xii.

⁵² Ibid, 416.

⁵³ Mark Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8.

Chapter 2 - Comparing Museums

History of the Museums

Universally World War I museum exhibits throughout the world attempt to educate the public about the facts of the war. Each museum discusses how the war started, the horrific battles, and the aftermath for the entire world. Each museum attempts to immerse their audience in World War I in different ways. The history of the museums and the mission, staff, and the management of the each museum affects the content of the exhibits.

In order to make this study manageable four museums were selected. The military museums selected are the World War I exhibits featured in 1st Infantry Division Museum at Fort Riley, Kansas, and the Chemical Corps Museum at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. The museums selected to illustrate the private museum model are the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, and the First Division Museum at Cantigny in Wheaton, Illinois. All were personally visited by the researcher and the exhibits carefully examined. Curators, directors, and some exhibit specialists were interviewed for their knowledge on their specific museum.

The First Infantry Division museum is part of the Fort Riley Museum Division. It is a two-museum complex which also includes the U.S. Cavalry Museum. They were originally separate museums. The First Infantry Division was established at Fort Riley in 1992. Other artifacts have been moved over from Germany, where the division was stationed. Dr. Robert Smith, Ph.D, directs both museums.

The Chemical Corps Museum is also part of the federal military museum system. It is based at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. This fort is the home of several training schools including the Military Police, Engineers, and Chemical Corps schools. Four museums on the

post are part of the John B. Mahaffey Museum Complex. There is a museum for every one of the military schools and also one that covers the history of Fort Leonard Wood. The Chemical Corps Museum is important for this thesis because it extensively covers World War I, since the corps was established during this era.

The current Chemical Corps Museum was initially called the Chemical Warfare Service Museum, located at the Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland. It was founded in 1919 to hold and display chemical-related artifacts from the Great War. With the budget cuts of the interwar period (1919-1939), the collection was used by the Chemical Warfare Service School by appointment only. During World War II almost seven thousand artifacts were sent to the museum. It was re-designated as the Chemical Corps Museum in 1950 and moved to Fort McClellan. Due to a lack of funds, the collection was split between the Army Chemical School and the Aberdeen Museum in the early 1970s, where, unfortunately, the majority of the collection was housed outside under a shed roof. This resulted in damage to the artifacts. In 1981 the Chemical School asked the Center of Military History (CMH) to reestablish the museum at Fort McClellan. The CMH agreed, and the museum remained there until the Base Closure and Realignment Act closed the fort in 1998. The museum's collection was then moved to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. It was reopened in 2003, and further renovations were completed in 2010. Since the museum is part of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), its main focus relates to training soldiers. Educating the wider public is only a minor part of its mission.⁵⁴

The National World War I Museum is located under the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri. This memorial was dedicated on November 1, 1921, to commemorate World

⁵⁴ *Chemical Corps Museum History*, given to Author, August 23, 2013.

War I soldiers who served and died for their country. After years of neglect, it was revitalized in the 1990s and a new \$102 million facility was built. In 2004 it was designated by Congress as the America's official World War I Museum. This distinguished title, however, did not allow the museum to obtain federal funding and it remains private. The exhibits opened in 2006 to critical acclaim.⁵⁵ This museum is different from the others because of its larger scope and budget. It is also the only museum to fully contextualize the American experience in World War I. In fact half of the large museum is devoted to the first few years of the war. The second half talks about the American involvement in the war.

The First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny has one of the most interesting origins. It was created upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the publisher of the influential and volatile *Chicago Tribune*. Robert McCormick was born in 1880 to the influential McCormick family. His maternal grandfather, Joseph Medill, was the owner of the newspaper and a former mayor of Chicago. His father was also named Robert McCormick, who was not as financially successful as his father-in-law. In fact, even with the assistance of the Medill family they still grew up in a relatively poor situation.⁵⁶ However, "Bertie" as he was known to his family, was still educated at Yale and traveled the world.⁵⁷ Bertie's military career began when he served with the National Guard as a Major with the First Illinois Cavalry during Pancho Villa's raid in 1916. In World War I McCormick personally wrote to General Pershing asking for an assignment. After serving on the General Staff, McCormick requested front line duty. He got his wish in January 1918 and joined the

⁵⁵ "Museum and Memorial." National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial. <http://theworldwar.org/explore/museum-and-memorial> (accessed April 25, 2014).

⁵⁶ Smith, Richard Norton, *The Colonel: The Life and Legend of Robert R. McCormick, 1880-1955*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company 1997), 41.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

First Infantry Division. He commanded the First Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, and was commended for his actions against the German artillery. McCormick's most important moment came at the battle of Cantigny. This battle was a critical turning point in the war. In May 1918 the First Division stormed the German-held village close to Paris.⁵⁸ It was the first engagement in which American troops truly proved themselves on the field of battle in the war.

However, during the battle at Cantigny McCormick fell ill from the gasses and he was sent to the rear. He spent the next year training soldiers behind the lines. After being promoted to Colonel he was discharged in December 1918 and remained in the Reserves until 1928. After the war he took over the *Chicago Tribune* as publisher. Throughout the rest of his life he continued a close association with the First Infantry Division. He hosted meetings and reunions at his large mansion in Illinois.⁵⁹ Upon his death in 1955, his will established the McCormick Museum, the McCormick Research Center, a park, and finally the First Division Museum at Cantigny. Even today, his legacy is important in how the museum is run.

Access to Museums

One of the biggest differences between the exhibits is access. The 1st Infantry Museum is located in the middle of a large military post. A driver's license and a car are required to access the museum if coming from off the post. It is easiest to access for military families on post. The same is true of the Chemical Corps Museum, which is located on Fort Leonard Wood. The admission for both museums is free to all visitors. The National World

⁵⁸ Ibid., 196.

⁵⁹ Andrew Woods, interview by Author, July 9, 2013.

War I Museum is located in the center of Kansas City, MO. It is easy to reach by car or public transportation. Adult admission currently costs fourteen dollars, seniors and students twelve dollars, and children eight dollars. Active military members receive half off. The First Infantry Division museum at Cantigny is located in the middle of the McCormick Park in Wheaton, IL. It generally costs five dollars on a weekday, two dollars at twilight, and sixty dollars for an annual pass. The admission to the actual museum is free.⁶⁰

The differences in their accessibility are one sign that the museums are catering to certain audiences. The 1st Infantry Museum is primarily for soldiers and their families. The Chemical Corps Museum is there to familiarize soldiers going through the Chemical Corps School on post with the history of their branch of service. The World War I Museum is for a wider audience, but only those who can afford and invest in the admission prices. The First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny's main audience is individuals and families who are interested in the unit's history. The curators hope to bring a broad audience and teach them about military history. Understanding the intended audience is critical to understanding the main mission of the museum.

Mission Statements

Every museum in the country is either mandated or strongly encouraged to have a mission statement by the American Association of Museums. According to *The AAM Guide to Collections Planning*, it is a "statement that articulates the fundamental reasons why the

⁶⁰ "Parking," First Division Museum at Cantigny, <http://www.firstdivisionmuseum.org/museum/visitingmuseum/parking.aspx> (accessed April 25, 2014).

museum exists. It is used to guide the museums' operations."⁶¹ The mission statement is a simple way to outline the scope of the exhibits and the collection within its holdings. It is usually the first step in setting up a new museum or reevaluating a museum's goals. These statements are purposely left rather vague in order to provide a broad interpretive range throughout the life of a museum. An in-depth examination of the mission statements of the four museums will help to reveal the museums' goals.

It is not surprising that each of these museums has different missions. The 1st Infantry Museum's primary objective is to instruct soldiers, and instructs the public about the history of the Division as a secondary function. Their official mission statement was approved by the Chief Curator of the Center of Military History on March 28, 2011. It reads:

The mission of the Fort Riley Museum Division is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret those materials that are integral parts of the history and traditions of the U.S. Cavalry from 1775 to 1952; the 1st Infantry Division and units assigned to Fort Riley.

The Museum Division will also support post education, training, research and historical programs to on-post units and activities as well as the greater Fort Riley community.⁶²

In an interview, Robert Smith, director of the 1st Infantry Museum, made it clear that the museum "is a recruitment tool."⁶³ Another interesting section is the 3-15 Exhibits section of the Army Regulations 870-20 which outlines museum management. It mentions that all

⁶¹ Gardner, James and Elizabeth Merritt, *The AAM Guide to Collections Planning*, (American Association of Museums 2004), 70.

⁶² Mission statement. 1st Infantry Museum, given to Author October 12, 2012.

⁶³ Robert Smith, interview by author, October 12, 2012.

museums must “follow an approved story line” by the CMH.⁶⁴ This affects the interpretation of history in exhibits.

The Chemical Corps Museum has a goal similar to the 1st Infantry Museum. Its main focus is on the soldiers and their families. More specifically, as a museum connected to TRADOC, this museum is used to train soldiers graduating from the Chemical Corps School.⁶⁵ The staff agrees this is their main goal. The wider public is only a secondary concern for the museum. The museum’s official mission statement was created in 1993 by the museum staff and was approved by the Chief Curator of the Center of Military History. It reads:

The mission of the U.S. Army Chemical Corps Museum is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret artifacts related to the history of chemical warfare and the U.S. Army Chemical Corps from 1917 to the present. In addition, the museum will educate, train and instill esprit de corps in Chemical Corps personnel, and inform the visiting public about the mission of the Chemical Corps.⁶⁶

This is very similar to the Fort Riley 1st Infantry Division Museum with the focus on training and inspiring soldiers.

In contrast, the National World War I Museum teaches a wider public about the importance of Great War. Their mission statement is:

⁶⁴ Department of the Army, “Army Regulation 870-20, Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art”, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1999), 17.

⁶⁵ Interview, Chemical Corps Museum Staff with author, August 23, 2013.

⁶⁶ Mission statement. Chemical Corps Museum, given to author, August 23, 2013.

The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial inspires thought, dialogue, and learning to make the experiences of the World War I era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations.⁶⁷

They also are:

Maintaining the Liberty Memorial as a beacon of freedom and a symbol of the courage, patriotism, sacrifice and honor of all who served in World War I. Interpreting the history of World War I to encourage public involvement and informed decision-making. Providing exhibitions and educational programs that engage diverse audiences. Collecting and preserving historical materials with the highest professional standards to share the stories of the Great War through the eyes of those who lived it.⁶⁸

Of the four museums, the National World War I museum most clearly stresses the importance of interpreting history for the present and future generations. They strive to engage a modern audience in the experiences of the Great War.

Cantigny museum has a brief mission statement that is listed on their website. It reads:

Carry out the intentions of Colonel Robert R. McCormick for Cantigny by preserving, interpreting and presenting to the public the history of the US Army's 1st Infantry Division in the broader context of American military history in order to promote understanding of American military history and affairs.

Invoking Colonel McCormick's service as a citizen soldier, FDM helps foster communities of citizens educated, informed and engaged in democratic civil-military relations and inspired by the stories of the past to responsible citizenship, leadership and service in the future.⁶⁹

McCormick still looms large in the daily running of the museum. While the majority of the mission statement is typical of a museum, the "Carry out the intentions of Colonel

⁶⁷ "Museum and Memorial," National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial, <http://theworldwar.org/explore/museum-and-memorial> (accessed April 25, 2014).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Mission Statement." First Division Museum at Cantigny. <http://www.firstdivisionmuseum.org/about/mission.aspx> (accessed April 25, 2014).

McCormick” poses some very interesting questions. The first one is exactly what his intentions for the museum were. Andrew Woods, the institution’s research historian, stated that there is not an official definition of his intentions on record. Instead there is an understanding of McCormick’s desire to bring veterans together to celebrate their history. The museum wants to keep this sense of community and brotherhood alive in the museum.⁷⁰

The mission statements reveal a diverse selection of museums. However, they share several commonalities, including the desire to educate their visitors. This is unsurprising since it is a main goal of all museums. However, each museum wants to educate its intended visitors in different ways. As the two military museums focus on soldiers they naturally emphasize training. They wish the current soldiers to understand their unit’s history and draw pride from it. Unstated in the mission statement of the 1st Infantry Division mission statement is that the museum also wishes to recruit new soldiers. The Cantigny museum wants to teach the history of the division, but also to “foster communities of citizens.” They wish to use stories of the past to teach the future about citizenship, leadership, and service. This is very different than the National World War I museum, which is the only one to use the word “inspires” in the mission statement. The museum wants to inspire “thought, dialogue, and learning” among visitors to make World War I relevant to the present. However, it is the word “meaningful” that is truly interesting. The museum staff wishes to create a personal connection with visitors so that they leave the museum with a new understanding of World War I and history in general.

Moreover, the National World War I Museum is the only one to emphasize a diverse and national audience. The Cantigny Museums cites a broad audience with “the public” but

⁷⁰ Interview. Andrew Wood with Author, July 9, 2013.

also caters to the veterans of the First Division. The two military museums have a more limited scope with the focus on soldiers. Naturally the content of the exhibits will follow from the selected audiences.

Museum Management

The management of any museum is very complex. All four museums are non-profit and have an organization that helps fund the museum. The museums' staff must find ways to maintain a healthy relationship with their respective organization, since they help fundraise for new exhibits. However, the relationship between a foundation and the museum staff can be strained, which can affect the content of the exhibits. The First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny and the National World War I Museum are both privately funded museums. The National World War I Museum does not have a foundation. Instead the museum has a membership program that provides "perks" for patrons who give donations.⁷¹ The two military museums are public military museums that are federally funded and run by the Center of Military History. They are run through the Army Regulation 870-20. However, they also have to work with the Commanding General (CG) of the post, who, according to regulations, "will support Army museums."⁷² Each CG decides how much help he wants or is able to provide the museum. A museum staff also must constantly think about their visitors since they are the main customers. All four museums have a system in place to answer complaints about the exhibit and to receive donations. In the end many different groups come

⁷¹ National World War I Museum, "Membership Benefits and Levels." Accessed October 4, 2013. <http://theworldwar.org/support/become-member/membership-benefits>.

⁷² Department of the Army, "Army Regulation 870-20, Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art", (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1999), 15.

together to fund and maintain a museum. While not all of them have a voice in the exhibit content, they all have an interest in bringing in as many visitors as possible.

Each museum has to answer to a larger organization or a board. These groups help fund-raise and are committed to community outreach. The 1st Infantry Museum and the Chemical Corps Museum are run by the U.S. Army and overseen by the Center of Military History (CMH). CMH is an organization that is dedicated to professionally develop and educate soldiers about the history of the Army.⁷³ According to their 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, CMH “accurately collects, preserves, interprets and expresses the Army’s history and material culture to more broadly educate and develop our force, the military profession, and the nation.”⁷⁴ They are subordinate to the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, who reports directly to the Secretary of the Army. All military museums are run through Army Regulation 870-20, “Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art.” The regulation defines a military museum’s structure, goals, and even provides details on artifact preservation. The 3-2 Objective, a section in the Army Regulation, makes it clear that the museums “are used to interpret the Army’s history for the purpose of military training, education, and research. As a side benefit, Army museums foster morale and esprit de corps, and contribute to informing the American people about the Army’s service to the nation.”⁷⁵ The regulations illustrate that military museums are primarily for military members.

⁷³ Center of Military History, "CMH Online Mission." Last modified 2011. Accessed October 19, 2012. <http://www.history.army.mil/html/about/onlmission.html>.

⁷⁴ The U.S. Army Center of Military History, "Strategic Plan, 2012-2017." Accessed August 26, 2013. http://history.army.mil/html/about/CMH_Strat_Plan_2012-2017-fixed.pdf.

⁷⁵ Department of the Army, “Army Regulation 870-20, Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art”, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1999), 13.

The Center of Military History in Washington, D.C traces its history back to the Civil War. At the time it was simply the part of the War Department that was responsible for collecting and publishing all of the records from the Civil War.⁷⁶ In 1903 a General Staff Act regulated historical study as part of the staff's function. It was not until 1918 that a Historical Branch was organized in the War Plans Division.⁷⁷ However, only a limited number of volumes were published on World War I because of staffing and budget cuts. At the time the staff consisted of mostly military officers who answered questions for the Army and the general public.

Everything changed with World War II when the military became highly interested in previous wars. In 1943 a section was created in the Intelligence Division of the General staff that brought in retired military historians. They also recruited and trained historians to deploy as soldiers to “supervise the gathering and preservation of necessary documents.”⁷⁸ With the rise in interest, a Historical Division was established in the Special Staff in 1945. The Special Staff hired civilian professional historians to write the history of World War II. With the increasing responsibilities of the department, it was expanded into the Office of the Chief of Military History in 1950. Since the war CMH have written over seventy-nine volumes covering every aspect of the war.⁷⁹ The department was also heavily utilized during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. The organization finally adopted its current name “The Center of Military History” in 1973 and later became part of the Office of the Chief of Staff,

⁷⁶ Terrence J. Gough, “The U.S. Army Center of Military History: A Brief History,” *Army History* 37 (Spring 1996): 1.

⁷⁷ Gough, 1.

⁷⁸ Gough, 2.

⁷⁹ The U.S. Army Center of Military History, "The Origins." Last modified March 29, 2012. Accessed August 26, 2013. <http://history.army.mil/html/about/overview.html>.

Army. In the 1980s CMH started to become more interested in managing the Army museum system. They have focused more on “direct staff supervision...acquisition of historical artifacts, improvement of conservation standards, and professional training.”⁸⁰ The head of the organization is the Army Chief Historian, who is currently Dr. Robert J. Dalessandro. The organization is based in Washington, D.C. Each military museum is assigned by the military a CMH contact.

The Chemical Corps Museum is a fascinating museum because it is run as part of the Fort Leonard Wood Museum complex. The larger museum complex is run by three separate directors, one for each of the museums. This naturally causes a need to work together to share building space and resources. The Chemical Corps Museum director is Kip Lindberg. Financially, the museum received federal funding and also receives help from the Chemical School for assistance.⁸¹ The museum also has an organization called the Chemical Corps Regimental Association. They are a cooperative association that runs the gift shop. Up to 25% of the profits from the gift shop sales go to the museum.⁸² The funds are most often used to purchase new artifacts.⁸³

The National World War I museum is a private and non-profit organization. The museum does not have a foundation that runs its finances.⁸⁴ The President and CEO is Matthew C. Naylor, PhD. He joined the museum staff in June 2013 with extensive

⁸⁰ Gough, 5.

⁸¹ Interview, Chemical Corps Museum Staff with Author, August 23, 2013.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ National World War I Museum, "Walk of Honor Bricks." Accessed October 4, 2013. <http://theworldwar.org/support/bricks>.

experience in non-profit museums.⁸⁵ The museum is run by a board of trustees from the Kansas City community to help with financial and governing issues. The board does not directly control the day-to-day working of the museum.⁸⁶ The museum is funded through a membership and donation program established to generate revenue from the public. The museum also maintains itself by using merchandise sales from the gift shop, by renting out space for events, and by subsidies from the city. The museum also sells bricks for a “Walk of Honor” outside the memorial. Families, individuals, and veterans of any wars can be memorialized for a donation.

The Museum Foundation which helps to run the Cantigny museum was chartered as a non-profit by the state of Illinois in June 1957. The museum was built with the help of the McCormick trustees, the Society of the First Division, and officers in the active First Infantry Division.⁸⁷ While modern wars lessened participation of the active duty First Infantry Division, the trustees and the Society of the First Division still participate heavily in the museum.⁸⁸

Staff

A museum staff is a diverse group of individuals, each with their own expertise and experience. This multi-talented team uses its myriad set of skills to create a visual experience that assists the visitor in understanding history through tangible and meaningful exhibits. At the National World War I Museum, Doran Cart is the Senior Curator. He started working

⁸⁵ "National World War I Museum Names Non-profit Leader as President and CEO." PRWeb. <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2013/5/prweb10730590.htm> (accessed April 25, 2014).

⁸⁶ Email from Jonathan Casey to author, October 4, 2013.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 15.

⁸⁸ Andrew Woods, interview by author, July 9, 2013.

there in 1990 and has now worked there for over twenty years. He earned his master's degree in museum studies and history from the University of California, Riverside, and has published multiple articles about World War I.⁸⁹ The Archivist and Research Center Manager Jonathan Casey has a B.A. in history, an M.A. in Museum Studies, and a teaching certificate in History and Social Studies. However, the majority of the staff is comprised of approximately two hundred volunteers.⁹⁰ Volunteers work as tour guides and in the research center.⁹¹

Robert Smith, the director and collections manager at the 1st Infantry Division entered the museum business later in life. The director Robert Smith earned a history bachelor's degree from Kansas State University in his early twenties. He then spent several decades working in the family business by running a movie theater. Smith considers his experience in the entertainment business helped him integrate education and a sense of fun in exhibits. His wife encouraged him in the late 1990s to return to school. In 2008 he earned his master's degree and then his Ph.D. in history. He is primarily a British historian focusing on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. He was recruited by the previous museum director Bill MacKale to become the Archivist in 2007. After MacKale retired, Smith was promoted to director in 2011.⁹²

Sandra Reddish was the collections manager at the 1st Infantry Division while working on her Ph.D. at Kansas State University. She was focused on World War I, but also

⁸⁹ Doran Cart, "WITH THE TOMMIES," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, 29 (2006): 172-183, http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2006autumn_cart2.pdf (accessed December 13, 2012).

⁹⁰ National World War I Museum, "Volunteer." Accessed October 4, 2013. <http://theworldwar.org/support/volunteer>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Robert Smith, interview by author, October 12, 2012.

took a class in memory studies. Before starting at the museum in 2008, she was enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps for several years. Reddish also spent some time working in manufacturing at Boeing. She missed learning, so she earned her bachelors in 1993 and her master's in public history at Wichita State University in 2003.⁹³ However, she left the 1st Infantry museum for new opportunities in July 2013 as this thesis was nearing completion. Both Reddish and Smith discovered their love of history in childhood and would visit museums with their families.

Each member of the staff at the Chemical Corps Museum have a background in history. The director, Kip Lindberg, graduated from Drury College with degrees in criminology and psychology and has a minor in history. He was always fascinated with history, but believed he could not find a job in the field. Eventually he did join the National Park Service and also worked for the State of Kansas in their historical Society at Mine Creek. He joined the Chemical Corps Museum as an archivist in 2003. Before becoming the director he also held positions as a curator and exhibit specialist. The curator, Cynthia Riley, retired from the military after serving over twenty-one years in the United States Army. She graduated with degrees in philosophy and history. She then attended the University of Missouri at St. Louis for her master's degree in history. She worked at the Missouri state archives before joining the Chemical Corps Museum in 2009. The exhibit specialist, David Franklin, served five years in the Air Force and then was a Missouri State Trooper. He has an undergraduate degree in history and a minor in education. He is currently earning his master's degree in history at Oakland University. He has actually worked at the Fort Leonard Wood Museum Complex since 2010. He has moved from the Engineer Museum to the

⁹³ Sandra Reddish, interview by author, November 7, 2012.

Military Police Museum before finally joining the Chemical Corps Museum as the Exhibit Specialist.⁹⁴

The staff at the Cantigny museum is the largest of the four museums. They have twenty-one staff members which include the director, museum educator, registrar, and even a graphic designer. While they all have varied backgrounds, they are all highly educated, especially on the 1st Infantry Division. The one interviewed for this thesis is Andrew Woods, the research historian. He has a Bachelor's of Science in Anthropology from Illinois State University. His focus was on historical archeology. Woods has also worked at the Library at North Central College before joining the First Division Museum part time in 1986. A year later he joined the staff as a full time member. He has taken numerous classes in order to catalog the books in the library's collection properly.⁹⁵

While the museum staffs at the four museums come from very different backgrounds, all are united in their love of history. They have received professional training at universities, though their expertise varies. While the majority appears not to have any training in memory studies, they learned history in a traditional academic setting. However, instead of teaching or research they decided to work with the wider public. They are trained to understand their topics and consciously choose what to include and exclude in exhibits.

Examination of Exhibits

In order to examine the exhibits of the four museums properly, a brief overview will help to keep the museums distinct. The Chemical Corps Museum has exhibits that discuss the history of the Chemical Corps from World War I to the present. The script was written by the

⁹⁴ Interview. Chemical Corps Museum Staff, August 23, 2013.

⁹⁵ Andrew Woods, email to author, September 13, 2013.

staff members and then approved by the CMH. The story line for the current exhibit was written and submitted in 2010. However, the exhibit space and style date back to the 1990s.

The story line was written to meet the following objectives:

- Address and answer the question, “What is the Chemical Corps?”
- Explore, in detail, the varied roles of the Chemical Corps from 1918 to today.
- Highlight individuals and their contributions to the Chemical Corps.
- Relate the history of the Corps at war and in peace.
- Explain how the Chemical corps mission has changed through the years.⁹⁶

The World War I exhibit begins with a display of a destroyed French town. An American soldier, represented by a life-size mannequin, stands among the rubble. Next to him is a 4-inch Stokes mortar that was adapted for use by the Chemical War Service. Once the scene is set, the exhibit continues with an explanation of how the Chemical Corps started at the American University. The exhibit then leads into an interactive trench with light and sound effects. It continues to a room with authentic maps from the period and several chemical warfare artifacts from the collection. The rest of the museum covers all the other war periods in American history from World War II to Afghanistan. There is a larger section that deals with the Vietnam War and Cold War since chemical weapons were a hot button issue during this time. However, there are several themed exhibits such as the technology section that covers Chemical Corps equipment of different types. One of the more child-friendly exhibits is one that features gas masks for animals ranging from puppies to horses.

The exhibits at the 1st Infantry Division museum tell the units’ history from World War I to the present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The scripts were written by the staff and approved by CMH. While the square footage of the museums is much smaller than the National WWI museum, they use every inch of it. One of the most interesting aspects of this

⁹⁶ *Chemical Corps Museum Exhibit storyline*, given to author, August 23, 2013.

museum is that the exhibits were built at different times. The bottom floor covers World War I and World War II. They were built in the mid-1990s. While there have been minor updates and rotation of artifacts, the majority of the exhibit still dates to that period. The top floor pertains to Vietnam, the Gulf War, NATO missions, Bosnia, Iraq, the home front, and the current war in Afghanistan. These exhibits were renovated in 2009-2011. Throughout the building there are mini-exhibits that deal with special heroes and events. There is a plan to renovate the World War I exhibit in the next few years.

The National World War I Museum exhibits cover World War I in more depth than any other museum. The scripts were approved by the staff, but were mostly written by contractors in the mid-2000s. These were experts in military history and World War I. Whenever possible, the museum strives to tell the history through the voices of the participants. Curator Dorian Cart points out that “We use a lot of quotes from participants so that the descriptions are in their words.”⁹⁷ The museum tour begins with a video that details the political situation in Europe before the war. The video discusses the different participants in the war. In the introduction hallway the scripts talk about nationalism and imperialism, and the displays show interesting artifacts from the pre-war period, both civilian and military. The exhibits set up the political, economic, and social climate right before the war. A hallway then leads into the main exhibit, which includes recruitment posters from both sides of the conflict. On the left hand side is a timeline that details all of the events of the war. On the right are themed exhibits that examine everything from weapons to civilian deaths. The exhibit frequently uses quotes from both leaders and common soldiers. The several trench exhibits go into detail on the daily life of a soldier. Half way through the exhibit is another

⁹⁷ Doran Cart, email to author, November 5, 2012.

video. It is in a large room where the visitors stand on a balcony. The screen, which is on the far wall, discusses the turning point of the war, the introduction of the AEF. On the ground floor, overlooked by the balcony, is a trench. It looks authentic with fake mud, soldiers marching with heads down, broken wagons, and a plane overhead. Light, explosions, flames, and gun sound effects all attempt to immerse the visitor in the daily life of fighting in a trench. In the next room, the exhibit moves to the introduction of American soldiers. The entire mood of the museum changes with the entrance of the Americans into the war. It shifts from a focus on endless slaughter and destruction to a lighter mood. The overhead lighting reflects this change with the next gallery seeming to be brighter. The American section begins with a wall of recruitment posters, just as in the European gallery. It continues with information about training soldiers, equipping them, and the major battles. Throughout the exhibit they go into detail about sub-groups of Americans including African American and Native American soldiers. They also talk about all the different countries and locations involved in the conflict from Japan to Africa. The end of the exhibit focuses on the consequences of the war and its connection to World War II. In the end they use their space wisely, and the displays allow a much broader coverage of the war than any of the other museums. A number of factors contributed to this, including having more room, financial resources, and the broadest mission statement.

The World War I exhibits at the Cantigny Museum cover only the involvement of the 1st Infantry Division. The 38,000-square foot exhibit space was renovated in 1992, 2000, and most recently in 2012.⁹⁸ However, several key policies date from 1992, including the rule that no dead bodies will be shown in any of the exhibits because such a display “might be too

⁹⁸ Andrew Woods, interview by author, July 9, 2013.

much for sensitive veterans or family members to accept.⁹⁹ All scripts are written by the staff and approved by the director. Most of the exhibit space is devoted to World War I and World War II; however they cover all the wars involving the First Infantry Division up to Desert Storm. The goal of the exhibits, according to Andrew Woods, is to “immerse the visitor in experiences of the soldiers”.¹⁰⁰ The introduction to the exhibit is deceptively simple but underwhelming, detailing the basics of what a division is composed of (10,000-20,000 soldiers) and how America entered the war. This is a stark contrast to a military museum, where the audience is expected to know this type of basic information. It then explains how the AEF soldiers were trained and notes that “at least half were new recruits.”¹⁰¹ There is also a brief video on how Colonel McCormick became involved in World War I.

The entire mood of the exhibit changes when a visitor enters the Cantigny exhibit, a haunting representation of the destroyed French town of Cantigny during the war. Broken buildings, dressers, and signs try to show that civilians lived in the town. The path of the exhibit then leads into a full-sized, dramatic representation of trench warfare. There are Americans above storming the trench and it looks muddy. Text and video are the only guides for civilians that are shocked by the living conditions. The subdued mood is reinforced with sound and light effects that make the visitors feel the machine guns and artillery in the pit of their stomachs. The exhibit then moves to a recreated inner trench where soldiers would have slept and lived. Staged bunks and artifacts are scattered as if the soldiers had just left. Voice actors recreate conversations about everything from baseball to death in the trenches. The

⁹⁹ Andrew Woods, email to Hannah Marsh, September 29, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Woods, interview by author, July 9, 2013.

¹⁰¹ Wall text, *Introduction Panel*, 1st Infantry Division at Cantigny Museum, Wheaton, IL, July 9, 2013.

end of the exhibit shows the celebration at the end of the war and grants the visitor and much needed reprieve from the horrors of the Great War.

Violence in Museums

All four of these museums deal with war. The essence of war is two opposing forces killing each other for material or ideological gain. On the ground level it is two men attempting to stay alive by killing each other. This constitutes one of the main jobs of a soldier. World War I was unprecedented in brutality because of the improvement in technology. The tank, machine guns, chemical weapons, and the trench spike were new ways to kill and mutilate another human being. War is by definition violent, and museums at times struggle to balance the reality of war with good taste.

Museums deal with the violence of war in different ways, sometimes even sanitizing it. There are several reasons museums do this. Many museums worry about funding or the public's reaction if an exhibit is too graphically violent. They worry about young children seeing images that would be age-inappropriate and receiving complaints from parents. The most interesting reason is provided by Dr. Robert Smith, who argues that they do not wish to be "re-traumatizing soldiers."¹⁰² This is a possibility for soldiers who have recently returned from war or who are still wrestling with their experiences.

There are some curators that think too much sanitization can be a problem. Sandra Reddish, the former collections manager at the 1st Infantry Museum, thinks that sanitized exhibits can lead to a "distortion of war" that eliminates the grisly death.¹⁰³ Instead museums focus on glory, valor, and "cool" weapons. Overly sanitizing war is a concern, but most

¹⁰² Robert Smith, interview by author, October 12, 2012.

¹⁰³ Sandra Reddish, interview by author, November 7, 2012.

curators manage to find a way to transmit the presence of violence without directly portraying it. Doran Cart, the curator at that National World War I Museum, states that “the visitor knows that war is violent so we do not feel compelled to constantly show them images of it or overburden them with descriptions of the violence to other human beings.”¹⁰⁴

Needless to say war is a controversial topic in museums that must face a constant compromise between good taste and displaying the realities of war. This is a particularly interesting problem for exhibiting a war that has just now passed from living to non-living memory. But even operating in the bounds of good taste, exhibit curators who want to include a more realistic portrayal of the violence of war in the exhibits run the risk of countering iconic memories of the war because cultural memories tend to sanitize the violence. As the Enola Gay firestorm demonstrated, an exhibit that runs counter to cultural memory runs the risk of controversy, large and small. For curators, the question of violence of war operates at a critical intersection of history and memory.

¹⁰⁴ Doran Cart, email to author, November 5, 2012.

Chapter 3 - Bodies and the Transition into Non-living Memory

Representations of World War I bodies are handled differently in each museum. As the Great War has become more disconnected from living memory, the depictions of bodies of the wounded and the dead of non-Americans have increased. In addition, the exhibit narratives have moved beyond the traditional military script, and mentions of the issue of race and gender are more common. There is also a greater inclusion of civilian participation in the war, an issue that was previously deemed unimportant. All of this means that the violence of war now has more representation, including non-military bodies, than ever before. Nevertheless, there remain sharp differences among the museums.

Civilian Bodies

Civilians are rarely mentioned in the four museum's exhibits, but are becoming more prominent. Three museums, the 1st Infantry, Cantigny, and Chemical Corps, only briefly mention civilian participation in the war. This is a problem because World War I was a global phenomenon that affected millions of civilian lives. In America the impact was limited to sending aid and raising money, although some civilians had to confront the prejudices that the war amplified. But while many were family or friends of soldiers, very few experienced the war. This was not the case in Europe, where over five million civilians died in the conflict.¹⁰⁵ This is not counting the families who were traumatized or displaced as a direct result of the war. Considering this information, it is surprising that civilians are only featured prominently in the National World War I Museum. The other three museums focus more on the military aspects of the war instead of focusing on the larger global impact.

¹⁰⁵ Wall text, *Dead and Wounded*, National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 19, 2012.

The Cantigny museum and Chemical Corps Museum allude to at the presence of civilians living near the battle-field. At the Cantigny museum a recreated French town is located just before the trench exhibit. It includes a destroyed house with rubble covering the interior. There is even a fireplace with candlesticks still on the mantle. Among the rubble is a photo album filled with pictures. It is as if the owners of the house did not expect to be bombed and did not have time to grab their most prized possessions. Continuing in the exhibit, the trench is to the left, and on the right are recreated facades of building. They look typical of a French town, except they are burned and scarred. A light flickers in the top of one window as if someone is reading by a candle in the middle of the night. Over the speakers are the sound of explosions and distant gunfire. The entire atmosphere of the miniature village attempts to capture the atmosphere of living in the middle of a war zone.

The Chemical Corps Museum also has a mini-recreated French village at the entrance of the exhibit. Like the exhibit at Cantigny, there are French posters on the dirty and partly destroyed walls. In the center of the exhibit is a mannequin of a soldier in the Chemical Warfare Service standing next to a stokes mortar. He is surrounded by destroyed buildings with artillery shell-sized holes in the walls; there appears to be a small fountain in what is left of a courtyard. Like the Cantigny museum, this one gives the impression that this is no longer home for anyone, but a war zone. While civilian bodies are not visible in either exhibit, their presence is implied in the recreated French towns. Finally, the oldest exhibits at the 1st Infantry Museum have the most limited representations of civilians. There are a few photographs of destroyed buildings. In the interactive trench, bombed out buildings are painted on the walls to look like they are off in the distance. The diminutive representation of

civilian loss in World War I further promotes the museum's goal to instruct soldiers on their military history.

In fact, the only museum that overtly discusses civilians is the National World War I Museum. This is not surprising considering the broad mission of the museum. It is intriguing how exhaustingly they examine non-combatants caught in the crossfire of the war. Civilians from both the Central Powers and the Allies are visible from the entrance of the exhibits. On the right side is a wall with European recruitment posters. One is a French poster depicting an angel with a sword protecting a woman and child from harm. This image is common with soldiers going off to war to protect their families at home. In the exhibit titled "Dead and Wounded," the last sentence reads "In occupied region and bombed areas behind all the battle lines, civilian men, women and children were also among the casualties."¹⁰⁶ Civilians are also mentioned in a panel titled "Destruction" about home destruction. They are also the main focus of an exhibit titled "War On Civilians." It discusses the German tactic of deliberately targeting civilians for bombing, zeppelin attacks, and of course, the sinking of the *Lusitania*. However, the panel also talks about how the Allies blockaded Germany and attempted to starve their civilian population into submission. At the end of the panel they "estimate that more than 5 million civilians perished as a direct result of the war."¹⁰⁷ The exhibit features artifacts, including a shattered head of Jesus and a broken crucifix. Later in the museum is an exhibit devoted exclusively to the *Lusitania*. This passenger ship was sunk by a German submarine on May 7, 1915. The Germans suspected war material was on the

¹⁰⁶ Wall text, *Dead and Wounded*, National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 19, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

ship; however 2,200 civilians drowned off the coast of Ireland, including 128 Americans.¹⁰⁸ The exhibit includes the famous recruitment poster of a woman and child drowning from the attack. The targeting of passenger ships eventually became a prominent argument for the Americans to join the Allies in World War I.

Civilians also appear later in the exhibit as numbers. The large floor-to-ceiling graphic titled “Total War” breaks down the cost of the war on the civilians. The large list has bold numbers in red with an explanation of their meaning below. One is “33: Number of German cities where food riots broke out in 1916 to protest rationing.”¹⁰⁹ A few more examples are “600,000: Armenian men, women, and child died during Turkish removals” and “2,970,000: British women in industrial employment, July 1918.”¹¹⁰ The “Total War” graphic makes it clear that civilians all over the world were affected by World War I. The National World War I museum also attempts to balance the narrative by pointing out how the Allies contributed to Central Powers’ civilian casualties through attempted starvation.

The most powerful exhibit that represents civilian casualties is called the crater. It is a cone shaped exhibit that portrays a building destroyed by artillery. Visitors can walk into the crater and see how destructive artillery was to the civilian population. The designers even placed a woman’s parasol in the exhibit for maximum emotional impact. This exhibit is the perfect example of how the representations of civilians have changed in exhibits. It highlights not only the existence of civilians in a war zone, but their sacrifices. The National World War

¹⁰⁸ Wall text, *Remember the Lusitania*, The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 9, 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Wall text, *Total War*, The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 9, 2012.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

I Museum with its broader mission statement shows that museums are becoming more inclusive about how extensively civilians were impacted by the war.

Killing German Bodies

Surprisingly, killing has become more prominent in several of the museum exhibits. However, the museums only show the killing of the “enemy” soldiers. The exhibits do not show the opposing side killing Americans. This reinforces the iconic myth of the virile and victorious American soldier.

Both the 1st Infantry Museum and the Chemical Corps Museum are similar in how they represent killing in war. This is not surprising since they are both military museums and are regulated by the same organization. Both museums avoid openly discussing killing through photographs or in the text. Sometimes museums use means such as art and artifacts to represent killing. One is the art print “I have assumed command” by James Dietz, which hangs at the entrance of the exhibit and also inside one of the exhibit cases in the 1st Infantry Division Museum at Fort Riley. It depicts the 1st Infantry Division at the battle of Cantigny in May of 1918. The painting depicts German and American soldiers in full battle and openly violent. Soldiers are shooting guns, brandishing bayonets, and dropping bombs from the air. Much of the combat depicted is up close and features almost hand to hand fighting. It is mainly Germans who are dying in the painting.

In another exhibit, featuring weapons used during the 1st Infantry’s history, there are several weapons that were used to kill. The best example is the U.S. M 1987 Trench Shotgun. According to the label, the weapon was so “lethal and feared by the enemy that the German

government attempted...to have it outlawed in combat.”¹¹¹ Finally, there is a video in the last gallery that graphically shows an American killing a German soldier. While it is only one small section in a larger video, it shows an American soldier stabbing a German with a bayonet. The video is a reenactment and was shot in black and white. A voice over by an actor reads a letter by Dick Witch, who served overseas during World War I. After killing the soldier, he states, “That was it for Jerry. He didn’t even make a sound.”¹¹² Jerry was a common moniker used for German troops. Dick Witch goes on to describe how scared he was and makes it clear that anyone would be terrified. However, he also states that he was equally scared of being considered “yellow” or cowardly by the other soldiers. Both the voiceover of a soldier speaking in his own words and the visual of the fight between the two soldiers is surprisingly violent. However, the entire video is several minutes long, and the clip of the bayonetting only lasts for a few seconds. Other than a few artifacts, the video, and the painting, there are no other representations of killing in the 1st Infantry exhibit.

The museum is reluctant to show any killing, because their main visitors are American soldiers and their families. The main groups of visitors are veterans who have served or are serving in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Robert Smith, the Director of the Museum, states that they tone down the violence of war throughout the museum so they will not “re-traumatize” veterans.¹¹³ The caution is no doubt particularly relevant given that so many of the soldiers and veterans personally know the violence of war.

¹¹¹ Wall text, “U.S. M 1897 Trench Shotgun” in *Instruments of War*, 1st Infantry Division Museum Fort Riley, KS, April 25, 2014.

¹¹² *War Letters: American Soldier Correspondence from World War I*, “The American Experience,” Museum viewing. Boston: WGBH Boston. April 25, 2014.

¹¹³ Robert Smith, interview by author, October 12, 2012

Killing of any kind in the Chemical Corps Museum is almost nonexistent. Artifacts used during the war are the only example of killing. There are pistols, rifles with bayonets, knives, and also chemical equipment that were used to kill in the war. There is a small exhibit on the Livens Projector that fired a 60-pound projectile containing poison gas up to distance of 1,500 meters.¹¹⁴ The exhibit notes the weapon's technology superiority: the projector was useful because it did not alert the enemy to the impending bombardment. The result of firing such a weapon is not mentioned. Killing is only vaguely hinted at in the Chemical Corps Museum and is never shown through the representations of bodies. It is important to point out that both the Chemical Corps Museum and the 1st Infantry Museum are controlled by the CMH regulations that mandate "tasteful exhibit."¹¹⁵ It may also be prudent to note that the Chemical Corps is a support branch, which is not a combat arms branch. It would not be surprising that more death and violence would appear in a museum focused on the Infantry.

Killing is shown more frequently at the National World War I Museum and the Cantigny Museum than at the U.S. military museums. At the Cantigny Museum, killing is shown through artifacts and displays with mannequins. Artifacts such as a German trench club, artillery shell, and a German helmet with bullet holes scatter the exhibit. They each hint at the death or wounding of a soldier. The museum does not attempt through scripts to connect death to the artifacts, since curators assume the audience can make the connection. The mannequins used in the exhibit are what set Cantigny apart from the military museums. At the beginning of the exhibit visitors are treated to a realistic trench exhibit from the battle

¹¹⁴ Wall text, *The Livens Projector*, The Chemical Corps Museums, Fort Leonard Wood, MO, August 23, 2013.

¹¹⁵ Robert Smith, interview by author, October 12, 2012

of Cantigny. As visitors walk along the trench, they see mannequins dressed as American soldiers attempting to storm the trench. Near the end of the trench it begins to go “underground” to what the inside of a trench looked like. At this point the visitor is walking in the middle of a trench surrounded by barbed wire. Sounds of gunfire and dark lighting set the scene. If a visitor looks up right at the end, through the barbed wire, one sees a mannequin of an American soldier pointing a rifle directly at the visitors face. The placement is startling, if easy to miss. It is meant to capture the danger of fighting and the likelihood of death. It is fascinating that the museum places the visitors on the sides of the Germans in the war through the exhibit. The Americans are shown to be winning the battle of Cantigny.

The National Museum confronts the killing of war most directly of the four museums: it is depicted from the very beginning of the exhibit. A wall of recruitment posters flanks the right side of the entrance. One in particular is a picture of a British soldier thrusting a rifle bayonet into the heart of a German soldier. In bold red letters it reads at the bottom “Put Strength in the Final Blow. Buy War Bonds.”¹¹⁶ In the background of the poster are soldiers fighting in the trenches. This graphic image drives home how buying war bonds will literally help British soldiers kill German ones. Later in the exhibit, on the wall of American posters, there is one with an American soldier about to thrust a bayonet into the face a German. The American is standing on the top of a trench as the German looks up from the bottom. A rising sun is in the background. The text reads “Don’t Let The Son Go Down. Buy 4th Liberty Bonds.”¹¹⁷ Both of these posters make it clear that killing was an integral part of war. The

¹¹⁶ Poster. “Put Strength In the Final Blow. Buy War Bonds.” National WWI Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

¹¹⁷ Poster. “Don’t let the Son go down. Buy 4th Liberty Bonds,” National WWI Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

British and United States governments used graphic images of killing as a way to raise money for the war.

Killing in American culture is different than it was even a few hundred years ago. People had experience with killing in intimate ways. Animals were slaughtered for food at home, not bought at a supermarket. Diseases killed everyone from newborns to the elderly. Dead bodies were prepared for burial at home. However, over time, with the rise of modern medicine, death has become almost taboo to talk about. It is no longer a daily occurrence, but a rare event that must be traumatizing. Soldiers coming home from war are expected to have deep psychological trauma, like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman in his book *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* points out that as killing has become more repressed “a new obsession with the depiction of violent and brutal death and dismemberment of humans has flourished.”¹¹⁸ This conflicting attitude is visible in the museums. All four museums are restricted in how much they show killing. The military museums controlled by CMH have almost no depictions at all. However, the newer museums show killing in a more explicit way. It is fascinating that with time and looser restrictions, the killing of German bodies is shown more frequently. As killing is the main point of war it creates a more realistic experience for the visitors. However, Germans killing Americans are suspiciously absent from any of the exhibits. This suggests that while progress is being made by showing authenticity in war, museums continue to have an aversion to showing American dead bodies. This is because the Americans who died during the war are revered as heroes and are memorialized within the museums.

¹¹⁸ LT. COL. Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: E-Rights/E-Reads, Ltd. Publishers, 1995), location 424.

Wounded Bodies

While all four of the museums shy away from showing dead bodies, all of them reveal wounded ones in different ways. More importantly, they are more than willing to show American soldiers wounded along with other Allied and Central Powers. Approximately two hundred thousand American soldiers were wounded during the war compared to two million British, four million French, and four million German.¹¹⁹ However, the only museum to mention civilian injuries is the National World War I Museum. This is interesting because it shows that the National Museum is continuing to include new story lines into the overall World War I narrative. Also, comparing how American wounded differ from foreign wounded reveals a continuing bias toward the icon of the American soldier.

World War I left lifelong damage to the minds of many American soldiers. However, only the National World War I Museum and the First Infantry Division Museum discusses shell shock. A display panel at the First Infantry Division Museum titled “Medical Care-World War I” connects shell shock to modern day post-traumatic stress disorder. The panel explains the disorder: “the increased horrors of battle gave tens of thousands of soldiers neurological overload, leaving them exhausted, depressed, and in need of psychiatric care. A range of new treatment geared toward restoring men to duty marked the first time military medicine specifically addressed soldiers’ mental health.” The panel further elaborates on treatment that included “simple support of a fellow soldier to more extreme measures, such as electric shock therapy.”¹²⁰ The National World War I museum has a brief mention near the end of one of the panels on health and injuries during war. After several sentences on how

¹¹⁹ “World War I Casualty and Death Tables”, *PBS The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century*, accessed September, 17, 2013.

http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath_pop.html

¹²⁰ Wall text, *Medical Care-World War I*, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Fort Riley Kansas.

artillery shells maimed bodies, it states that “many soldiers suffered from shell shock, a term coined during the war to describe extreme mental trauma from combat experiences.”¹²¹

It is fascinating that both museums interpret shell shock differently. The National World War I museum does not provide an interpretation, but focuses on the facts. However, the 1st ID Museum connects shell shock to the modern name of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. While the symptoms of PTSD have been around for thousands of years, it was not until 1980 that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III).¹²² In recent years, especially since the Gulf War, PTSD has become an important issue for the military with so many soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. The 1st Infantry Division Museum is attempting to connect the audience’s present reality with the past. It is a way for soldiers to understand that they are not alone in experiencing PTSD symptoms. It is fascinating that the Cantigny Museum and the Chemical Corps Museums do not discuss the subject at all. Both museums end their scripts with the Armistice and do not look at the life of a soldier post-war. This was probably a choice in order to definitively end the exhibit. However, by neglecting to mention the post-war experience, the exhibits ignore an important part of how a soldiers’ life was and is impacted by war. Overall, as living memory has shifted into non-living memory, more exhibit commentary continues to add new complications and understandings about World War I. Perhaps it is a way of making history that is truly “past” more relevant to more visitors.

¹²¹ Wall text, *Medical Care*, National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 9, 2012.

¹²² “PTSD: The National Center of PTSD,” Last Modified: March 25, 2014, <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/ptsd-overview.asp>.

Bodies wounded directly from warfare are also handled differently among the various museums. At both the 1st Infantry Division and Chemical Corps Museums, wounded bodies are rarely shown. The art print at the 1st Infantry Division by James Dietz depicts one of the few examples. Near the center of the print a group of German soldiers are carrying away an American on a stretcher. His helmet is very prominently displayed on his chest. A bloody bandage is visible on his chest, and blood is on his grey face. There are no photographs of soldiers wounded by rifles, artillery, or bayonets in the exhibit. Surprisingly the Chemical Corps Museum has no photographs or paintings of wounded soldiers at all. All four museums have photographs of soldiers with bandages over their eyes, which is technically wounding. However, the way they are portrayed is similar, a subject discussed later in the paper.

There is a noticeable change when entering the exhibits at the National World War I and Cantigny museum. At the Cantigny Museum there is one photograph that features a wounded individual. However, it is not an American soldier, but the war correspondent Floyd Gibbons. Gibbons lost an eye saving an American soldier in the Battle of Belleau Wood.¹²³ It is not surprising he was included in the exhibit since he was a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. In the photograph Gibbons is wearing an eye patch and has his left arm in a sling. This is the only photograph of an individual wounded in war in the entire exhibit, and it is not even a soldier. An incredible artifact later in the exhibit is a nurse's American Red Cross uniform. The white apron that covers the dress has specks of blood all over it that are visible to the visitors. While it is unknown to whom the blood belongs, it is certainly a soldier's. It is not hard to imagine that the nurse was treating wounds inflicted in battle almost a century ago. This artifact, while the only one to represent wounded soldiers, is incredible powerful.

¹²³ Wall text, *War Reporting*, 1st Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny, Wheaton, IL, July 9, 2013.

At the National World War I Museum there is a section of the exhibit titled “Dead and Wounded.” It talks about the millions of men who were disfigured or lost a limb. The bottom photograph of the exhibit is of a French aid station with an American ambulance. It shows a man on a stretcher with bandages around his head and neck being carried toward the ambulance. Later in the exhibit there is a photograph of two French soldiers carrying a wounded comrade in their arms. He has a bandage wrapped around his forehead, but not his eyes. The specific exhibit is about French trenches and the two soldiers depicted are moving quickly toward an aid station. In the American half of the exhibit there is an entire section devoted to the medical corps. There are beds set up to look like an aid station and an ambulance. The exhibit goes into detail on how soldiers were evacuated from the trenches to the hospitals. There are multiple pictures of wounded Americans being carried away on stretchers. There are even quotes from wounded soldiers’ letters home telling their families about staying in the hospitals. The museum equally shows both American and Allied wounded. However, they do not show wounded German soldiers.

Over time exhibits change to reflect new scholarship and interpretations. In the four World War I exhibits in this study, three things have changed the most. Museums have broadened the discussion of civilians and their participation in the war. They have also begun to feature the physically wounded bodies of soldiers as well as discussing the mental health aspect of war. Both of these reflect current concerns about the consequence of war. The focus on mental illness and its ties from World War I to today is particularly interesting. It grounds PTSD in history as a shared experience among soldiers. The killing of German bodies has also changed in the museums. The exhibits are attempting to show the realities of war without depicting the presumably sacred body of an American soldier. These three examples

show that as living history changes into non-living history, significant changes are occurring in World War I museums.

Chapter 4 - The Body and American Myths

While there is considerable change occurring in the museums as living memory turns to non-living memory, certain myths remain. All of the museums respect certain American myths that maintain the nation's identity. Americans consider their identity as a nation to be based in power, honor, and individuality. The American soldier is a major icon for this identity. American soldiers are portrayed as tough men who fight bravely for the nation's ideals and for the protection of the freedom. Museums either intentionally or unintentionally want to respect this aspect of American identity. In all four museums, in both photographs and paintings, American soldiers are shown as surprisingly robust for men fighting in a war. They are usually depicted as marching, relaxing, or just about to engage in combat. American soldiers are rarely shown to be sick, and when they are it is not connected to war. For example, there is some discussion of the "Spanish influenza" during World War I era, but no discussion of sexually transmitted diseases. The few exhibits that focus on dead soldiers are, in effect, memorializations of those whose heroic actions earned them special recognition such as the Medal of Honor. The myth of the American soldier does not acknowledge the more realistic experience of the soldiers in World War I.

Healthy Soldiers

While museums have become more inclusive of depictions of violence, there is still something of a taboo about showing American soldiers as damaged by war. The healthy bodies of soldiers are prominent throughout the exhibits of all four museums. American soldiers are seen driving, eating, talking, and sitting. Their bodies are relaxed as they calmly write a letter home to their loved ones. This is surprising since all the exhibits focus on one of the bloodiest wars in human history.

Relaxing between battles is another common motif throughout the exhibits. At the 1st Infantry in an exhibit about trench warfare are two interesting photographs. One is a group of soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder drinking coffee. Another is a soldier sitting in a covered area writing a letter home. In a section on “Life at the Front”, all of the pictures show soldiers marching, eating, and relaxing. This is a stark contrast to the artifacts on display, which include dog tags and the last letter of a doomed soldier.¹²⁴ It is very similar in the “Battles and Campaigns” exhibit, where soldiers are carting up equipment on donkeys, standing near tanks, sitting for a rest, or even shaking hands with General Pershing. There is also a photograph of a group of soldiers posing in front of the camera. At the Chemical Corps Museum a picture in the introduction exhibit about the Stokes mortar shows soldiers standing about and relaxing as shells are brought to the gun.

Another common theme in these “relaxation” images are soldiers posing with weapons. One photograph at Cantigny shows a group of soldiers posing next to a French 155mm Schneider. (Photos like this are very common among today’s soldiers: a common photograph is a group of soldiers posing with the biggest military equipment around.) Another photograph later in the exhibit is from the battle of Soissons. The enlarged photo shows a big group of men relaxing. Men are milling around talking to each other, sitting on artillery equipment, and rifling through military equipment. At the National World War I Museum there are more photographs of soldiers relaxing. This is not surprising since the exhibit is so much larger than in the other museums. Like in the Cantigny museum there are photographs of men posing with the larger artillery equipment, smoking pipes, and resting in the trenches. One interesting similarity between all the photographs, except in the National

¹²⁴ Wall text, *Life at the Front*, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas, September 19, 2013.

World War I Museum, is that the relaxing soldiers are only American or Allied. They never provide any representations of the soldiers of the Central Powers in anything other than direct conflict.

The one exception can be found in the National World War I museum. On display are several photographs of Central Powers' soldiers relaxing including in the trenches. These photos, like the others of Americans or Allies, also give an impression of normalcy and safety despite the specter of death hovering over each soldier. The image of a soldier writing a letter or taking a smoke break show that even in the worst moments a human can find a type of peace.

One possible reason for the unusual focus on healthy bodies is the limitations of technology in World War I. It was difficult to get action shots of the battles with the available cameras. Also, the photographer would by necessity be at extreme risk. However, pictures of the violence and dead bodies do exist, but museum exhibits tend to favor images of soldiers maintaining a sense of "normal life" during wartime. But why? One strong possibility is the images of healthy, relaxed soldiers – particularly if they are Americans – help to reinforce the memory of American soldiers as everyday heroes.

Another common representation of bodies in the exhibits is those of healthy soldiers just about to engage in combat. At the entrance of the Chemical Corps exhibit is the one mannequin standing tall and strong. He appears to be dirty and is completely surrounded by destruction. His uniform is completely whole and not ripped. The pictures below the introduction exhibit show soldiers loading chemical weapons. They are loading a 4-inch Stokes mortar while wearing gas masks in one picture. In the other picture they are not wearing gas masks. In this picture, which was taken in France in 1918, they do not seem to

be stressed. Men are standing in about relaxed in posture as they bring shells to the mortars. At the 1st Infantry Museum there are only a few photographs of soldiers just about to engage in combat. Some feature soldiers marching across fields in battle. Others are during the battle of Cantigny and some are from the battle of Soissons. Both show men slowly walking across a field. Another photo shows the 7th Field Artillery at the battle of Soissons. Similar photographs are in the National World War I Museum. One photograph shows French soldiers on a raid and depicts two soldiers creeping down a German trench looking for the enemy. These portrayals show soldiers at their strongest just before the killing begins.

Marching is another frequent representation of soldiers' bodies throughout all four museums. There are two examples at the Chemical Corps Museum. One depicts Americans marching with their equipment into ravaged France. The other is a crude drawing of soldiers carrying the Livens projector. This was a mortar that was designed by the British Army and which was highly effective at suppressing the enemy. However, the Livens projector was also notorious for being heavy. It would have been difficult to maneuver, but in the drawing it appears easy.¹²⁵ The other three museums also have similar pictures of marching throughout the exhibits, usually with a large hill or destroyed buildings in the background. At the Cantigny museum the main photograph for the "Training Over There 1917-1918" exhibit is a large photograph of soldiers marching in France with a large American flag flying. On the sidelines are men, both civilian and military, saluting the formation.¹²⁶ Marching is also seen in the National World War I museum, especially in the American section. In a section on the "American Doughboys", a photo shows the 139th Infantry of the 38th Division passing

¹²⁵ Wall text, *The Livens Projector*, The Chemical Corps Museums, Fort Leonard Wood, MO, August 23, 2013.

¹²⁶ Wall text, *Training Over There 1917-1918*, The 1st Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny, Wheaton, IL, July 9, 2013.

through Jarmeuil, France, in June of 1918. Shortly thereafter is a photograph of U.S. Marines marching through another town in France. Similar pictures are in the 1st Infantry Division that are about the battle of Sessions. They are marching through other undescriptive parts of France and Germany. In each museum there are multiple pictures of marching. What is interesting is that they are all photos of American soldiers.

The frequent representations of the body in motion, especially in military step, support the memory of strong American bodies. Some of the photographs and drawings are from the soldiers' training period. However, a significant number of the photographs were taken when the AEF was in France and Germany. It gives the impression that even in the chaos of war the Americans are maintaining their military bearing. In reality, traveling from battle to battle was far more chaotic. There was congested traffic on roads, and men scattered from battles in the countryside. The exhibits then tend to perpetuate an idea of war as something other than chaotic and continue the myth of American soldiers as strong components to a heroic military.

The Sick Body

One of the most prevalent myths found in museums is the depictions of the field of battle as unaffected by illness. In World War I, soldiers were wounded in horrifying numbers. Civilians were displaced from their homes. The great movements of people within this global conflict were the perfect breeding ground for disease. Surprisingly the museums rarely talk about illness. The most significant disease during the war years – and indeed, one of the deadliest epidemics in world history – was the 1918 influenza pandemic, commonly known as the Spanish Flu during the war.

Influenza is featured at the National World War I Museum and 1st Infantry Division Museum. This is not surprising since the disease is thought to have originated at Fort Riley. An Army cook named Albert Gitchell went to the infirmary on March 11, 1918 with cold-like symptoms. By the end of the day the infirmary was filled with over one hundred men.¹²⁷ The troops shipping out to Europe carried the disease with them. It soon spread and became a global pandemic that lasted for two years. It ended up killing 50-100 million individuals.¹²⁸ The exhibit includes photographs of men being carried away on stretchers. The illness was so devastating to the world's population that it has attained iconic status.

What is not talked about at all in any of the exhibits is the rate of venereal disease. While it is not surprising that museums would be reluctant to talk about a sexual topic, it was a real issue in World War I. Edward Coffman in his book *War to End All Wars* focuses on Pershing's battle tactics and strategy, but he also looks at Pershing's preoccupation with creating a "moral" military force. This latter goal meant that Pershing worried about prostitution and venereal disease. He and his command had two reasons for their fight on venereal disease. The first reason was practicality, as the disease dragged down efficiency. The other reason was that prostitution and venereal disease contradicted the idea of Americans as moral soldiers. Coffman describes Pershing's battle with the disease in detail. To eliminate the disease, the command provided programs aimed at eliminating "temptation." Soldiers were banned from brothels and alternative recreation, such as organized singing, was provided. If the soldiers still contracted the disease, they faced a potential court-martial. Pershing held each of his unit commanders personally responsible for

¹²⁷ Wall text, *The 1918 Influenza Outbreak*, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas. September 19, 2013.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

the rate of venereal disease in his unit.¹²⁹ In these efforts, as Allan Millett has noted, Pershing was largely successful.¹³⁰ While Pershing's fight against venereal disease is not his most important accomplishment of the war, it shows that Pershing was an effective leader who understood how the disease could lessen the effectiveness of his troops.¹³¹

This disease warranted extreme measures from a concerned command, but no notice from museums. The topic of sexually transmitted disease is, of course, naturally controversial for a public museum. The staffs of all four museums need to provide a family-friendly atmosphere for their visitors, even if they generally focus on adults. However, glossing over the most difficult topics of a soldier's experience detracts from the soldier's real experiences. Perhaps not incidentally, it also contributes to the icon of the American soldier by ignoring the more unsavory aspects of military life.

The Dead

World War I was the one of the most violent wars in modern history. While figures are still disputed, there were over thirty-seven million casualties. The war left twenty-one million wounded, seven million missing, and eight million dead.¹³² The bodies were plentiful after such a devastating conflict, and there are many images and artifacts of those dead. On this point museums face the dilemma of what can be exhibited that is still in "good taste" or acceptable for viewing by children. However, several of the museums seem to have no

¹²⁹ Edward Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 133.

¹³⁰ Allan Millett, and Maslowski Peter, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 366.

¹³¹ Gary Mean, *The Doughboys: America and the First World War*, (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2000) 202.

¹³² "World War I Casualty and Death Tables", *PBS The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century*, accessed September, 17, 2013.

http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/casdeath_pop.html

problem showing the bodies of the enemy and even the Allies. None, with one small exception, portray any American bodies. This suggests that showing dead American bodies would not properly honor the soldiers' sacrifice and would countermand the myth of the American soldier.

Military museums are regulated by the Center of Military History on how they can portray the dead. In the 3-15 Exhibits section of the Army Regulations 870-20 it states that all museums must "follow an approved story line."¹³³ This process involves sending scripts written by the museums staff to the Center of Military History office. Once it is approved the exhibit may move ahead. The scripts are examined for historical accuracy.¹³⁴ Museums are also inspected by the Center of Military History to make sure they are following regulations.¹³⁵ According to Robert Smith they are also unofficially examined for "good taste."¹³⁶ Since neither of the two military museums show dead bodies, with one small exception, this suggests that the depiction of dead bodies are deemed inappropriate. Instead, the dead are discussed in different ways through dog tags and letters. In the two private museums curators have more autonomy for the scripts. At the Cantigny Museum and National World War I scripts are looked over by the staff, but are generally not shown to a board of directors. If they are it is a matter of courtesy. The military museums are clearly more restricted through regulations. However, while they are not regulated they still are sensitive of their audience and limit the portrayal of dead bodies.

¹³³ Department of the Army, "Army Regulation 870-20, Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art", (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1999), 17.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Department of the Army, "Army Regulation 870-20, Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art", (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1999), 13.

¹³⁶ Robert Smith, interview by author, October 12, 2012

It is important to note that a modern audience is far less familiar with death than even one hundred fifty years ago. Drew Gilpin Faust in her ground breaking book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* discusses this shift. Her book, while about a different historical period, is very useful in its analysis of how a country deals with war and death. She argues that during the pre-Civil War era people were much more familiar with death because of unsophisticated medical knowledge, disease, and a short life expectancy. In addition, most of the deaths occurred at home. What was shocking about the Civil War was not death itself, but that it took so many healthy men suddenly and in doing so created a gulf between a “good death” at home surrounded by family and a gruesome death on the battlefield or in the hospital.¹³⁷

Even more significant is that a major modern war, with the exception of Pearl Harbor and recent terrorist attacks, has not taken place on American soil in the 20th or 21st century. Instead American soldiers were sent overseas to fight in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. This creates a disconnect between a modern museum visitor’s familiarity with death and exactly what a war involves. The only communication about war is through radio, television, and talking with veterans when they return. Contemporary movies such as *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Pacific*, and *Band of Brothers* attempt to capture the essence of combat and the uncertainty of death. However, World War I is far less popular in Hollywood and there are fewer movies that take place during the war. According to Kip Lindberg of the Chemical Corps Museum, this factor makes it difficult for museum visitors to relate to World War I.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, (New York: Random House, 2008), xiii.

¹³⁸ Kip Lindberg, interview by author, August 23, 2013.

The bodies of the dead, especially those of American soldiers, are difficult to deal with for museums. In fact, there is almost a complete absence of dead American soldiers in all the four museums. This is because museums focus more on commemoration of the American soldier. The Cantigny Museum created a policy in 1992 when the new exhibits opened to have no images of dead bodies in the Main Exhibit Hall. The staff decided such images “might be too much for sensitive veterans or family members to accept.”¹³⁹ The 1st Infantry Division and the Chemical Corps Museums are also limited by the Center of Military History under the clause of “good taste.” The National World War I Museum is more relaxed in showing dead bodies, but does not show any American dead.

In terms of American dead, three out of the four museums do not show any American dead bodies. The Chemical Corps Museum does not show dead bodies of any nationality. The Cantigny Museum and National World War I museum show bodies of the other participants of the war, but not Americans. The exception is at the 1st Infantry Division Museum. While there are no photographs of American dead bodies, there is one print. The print is titled *Summer-Soissons* in the bottom corner of an exhibit titled “Battles and Campaigns.” It is an obscure print of a painting and shows American soldiers marching across a field. In the right part of the painting are dark clouds, and amongst the clouds are the dead bodies of American soldiers. They are almost shadows and difficult to identify as American. Only a close examination of the helmets reveals their nationality. The representation is so minor it almost seems accidental. It is clear that all the museums either obscurely show the bodies of dead American soldiers or avoid the topic entirely.

¹³⁹ Andrew Woods email to Hannah Marsh, September 29, 2013.

While the majority of the museums do not show dead American bodies, they have no problem showing enemy bodies. In the 1st Infantry Division there is a very graphic dead body of a German soldier in the museum. It is on a TV screen in the final part of the exhibit. This part of the exhibit reads letters from World War I soldiers and reenacts their experiences. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the most relevant clip depicts the American soldier Dick Witch who, in a reenactment, is shown stabbing a Germany soldier in the throat with a bayonet. The reenactment takes place in black and white. It never shows the faces, only the two soldiers meeting and then fighting for their lives. The American soldier overpowers the other and the German's body falls to the ground.¹⁴⁰ This clip enforces the memory of the brave American soldier who is afraid of nothing except cowardice. It also suggests that depicting the killing of an "enemy" is acceptable for public consumption.

The National World War I museum does show dead bodies of other allies and of the Central Powers. The most graphic image is a tall photograph of a soldier dead in the mud. His body is broken and disjointed. This is the unfiltered product of war. Below the picture is a cabinet that is titled "Dead and Wounded" that focuses on the worst part of the war. It acknowledges the millions of disfigured, wounded, and dead. A small picture in the cabinet is of a French burial party moving bodies to a grave. The bodies are massed into piles and are faceless. Other photographs include French soldiers carrying their wounded and one of German amputee soldiers working on a farm. Later in the exhibit a large photograph above the cases shows a field of dead bodies in the woods. However, the curators make the photograph hard to spot by placing it around a corner to the main path of the exhibit. It is also high up: visitors have to maneuver to see the entire photograph. The curators do this to keep

¹⁴⁰ *War Letters: American Soldier Correspondence from World War I*, "The American Experience," Museum viewing. Boston: WGBH Boston. April 25, 2014.

the content appropriate for young viewers. Later in the exhibit on trench warfare is a picture of a trench. It looks like a normal black and white picture except in the lower left corner is the body of a dead soldier splayed across the bottom of the trench. It is part of a larger exhibit on trenches called “the Long Grave.” Even the inclusion of the word “grave” suggests a memorial to the dead rather than just a battle zone. The presence of several graphic photographs shows that the museum is willing to acknowledge that death is an integral part of World War I history, even while commemorating the American dead.

Museums use other ways to talk about dead bodies in World War I. Museums use artifacts, photographs of soldiers who later died in combat, and statistics to talk about death. The Chemical Corps Museum has one statistic that details the gas attacks and casualties in the war. However, Americans using gas or hurt by gas are not even on this graphic. It only lists the gas attacks between April 1915 and August 1917 that occurred with the Germans attacking the Allies. It then lists the casualties, including the dead, and what type of gas was used. This is misleading, as according to Edmund Russell in *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring*, about two percent of American soldiers who were exposed to chemical gas died.¹⁴¹ This might seem like a low number to a visitor, but chemical gasses from that period were far more effective at creating wounded casualties than dead bodies. In the Chemical Corps Museum there is not a single photograph, mannequin, or painting that shows a dead American soldier. This is despite historical evidence which makes it clear that soldiers died from chemical weapons.

¹⁴¹ Russell, Edmund, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals From World War I to Silent Spring*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 39.

The Cantigny and 1st Infantry museums also use statistics in similar ways. They both embed the numbers of the dead inside text panels. In the Meuse-Argonne exhibit the end of the label mentions that there were 7, 671 casualties from the battle “22% killed or dying of wounds.”¹⁴² In the St Mihiel exhibit the label mentions that the division sustained “544 casualties” from the total of seven thousand Allied casualties. At the battle of the Soissons the total casualties of the division were 7, 317 including dead, captured, and wounded. Since the 1st Infantry Division museum covers the same division as the Cantigny it is not surprising that the same battles are discussed. For example at the Battle of the Cantigny there were 1602 casualties and 199 killed.¹⁴³ The museum uses the same method of listing the casualties at the end of the label. Embedding the number of the dead in the label is a traditional way to talk about the dead. It shows the scope of the conflict and how much it cost in lives. It also is a way to mention the dead while still being age-appropriate. However, it is a very detached way to talk about the dead. It boils the sacrifice of the soldiers down to a simple number. Also, it is commonly understood in museums that not every visitor will read all the labels. Instead they skim the labels they find most interesting. By doing this visitors may not understand just how many Americans died in the conflict.

The National World War I museum uses creative ways to show statistics in the exhibit. These graphics demonstrate, in some small way, the great and horrible thing that the Great War was, and in a way that the lay-person can understand. All of them are large and stretch almost from floor to ceiling so they are impossible to miss. The first is titled “No Man’s Land” and is a bar graph that shows on the bottom the total forces deployed by

¹⁴² Wall text, *Meuse-Argonne*, 1st Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny, Wheaton, IL, July 9, 2013.

¹⁴³ Wall text, *Battle of Cantigny*, 1st Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny, Wheaton, IL, July 9, 2013.

country. On top are bars that represent the war losses from each country.¹⁴⁴ It is an interesting way to show what proportions of each country were killed. Another graphic is titled “Total War.” There are red numbers lined up on the graphic with a brief description below that explains what it represents. For example the number 466 represents the “length in miles of Western front across Europe in October 1914.”¹⁴⁵ The first statistic on the list is the number 1, which represents “one out of three French men between the ages of 18 and 30 died by 1917.”¹⁴⁶ This graphic is an interesting way to make complicated statistics interesting to the modern audience. It also is a compelling way to show the impact of total war. Both of these statistics are in the first half of the exhibit. In the second half there are two graphics that talk about death. One is the total “American Casualties”. The numbers are separated and clearly visible. It lists 365,489 total casualties, with 50,385 killed in action. Surprisingly it also lists 350 women who died in the war.¹⁴⁷ It is the only exhibit in any of the museum that actually acknowledges that women died in the war. Statistics are a clean way to show a visitor the sacrifices of a war. While each museum uses different techniques, they all try to show the impact of the war without showing dead bodies.

Museums also use other types of media to talk about death. In the Cantigny exhibit there is a section that looks like a trench. It has in it a mannequin using the phones. Bunks are placed around as if a group of soldiers just left. Over the sound system is a recording of actors having a conversation like soldiers during the period. They talk about baseball,

¹⁴⁴ Wall text, *No Man’s Land*, The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri. November 9, 2012.

¹⁴⁵ Wall text, *Total War*, The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 9, 2012.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Wall text, *American Casualties*, The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 9, 2012.

McCormick's Chicago Tribune, and of course the horrors of the battle-field. The soldiers talk about the death of two friends who were hit by an artillery shell. They looked "like they were sleeping."¹⁴⁸ This is an interesting piece of evidence that supports the claim that the museum, even in a fictional script, wanted to give American soldiers a "good death," a death that did not shatter their bodies or render them undefinable.

Commemoration is the most common way all four museums discuss the Americans killed in the war. A variety of different methods are used to honor the soldiers who died. One of the most common way museums commemorate the dead is through those who earned medals. The Medal of Honor, the highest medal possible for a serviceman, is an easy way to do this. At the end of the Cantigny exhibit is a display that devotes a significant amount of wall space detailing Medal of Honor winners. The Cantigny museum also honors the common soldiers who died in the war. The introduction exhibit looks at the first three American soldiers killed in the war. These men were Pvt. Merle Hay, Capt. James Gresham, and Pvt. Thomas Enright. The exhibit does not go into detail on the men's lives, but does show a picture of each man. Overall, the Cantigny exhibits do emphasize the closeness to death on the battle front with pictures of heroes and their medals.

At the 1st Infantry Division museum the wall shows the five Medal of Honor winners from World War I. This memorial board is in fact nearly identical to the one at the Cantigny museum. This is not surprising since they both study the same division. It goes into great detail about how each man earned the medal. One example is Pvt. Wilbur Colyer who earned his medal for locating and taking over a machine gun nest near Verdun, France on October 9

¹⁴⁸ Audio recording, Chemical Corps Museum, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, August 23, 2013.

1918. He managed to kill the German gunner and then turn the gun on the other nests that were surrounding him. Pvt. Colyer, who was from Brooklyn, New York, was later killed in action. Surprisingly, The Chemical Corps Museum does not have an honor wall of any kind, which is unusual for a military museum. In fact, among other medals, eighteen Distinguished Service Crosses were awarded to the First Gas Regiment during the war.¹⁴⁹ None of these medals are matched to faces or stories in the museum. At the National World War I museum there is also no wall honoring Medal of Honor winners. Instead of focusing so much on heroes, they commemorate the deaths of common soldiers.

Artifacts from soldiers who died during the war are used in the museums to commemorate the soldier. At the National World War I museum one of the final exhibits examines mourning. Artifacts include dog tags and memorial pins. The most interesting is a temporary grave marker for Henry Jephson Hilary. He was a second lieutenant and was a member of the Royal Field artillery who was killed on June 2, 1917. The grave was used until a permanent marker was put in place. It is interesting that the displayed grave is a British soldier and not an American. The 1st Infantry Division museum also uses artifacts to commemorate the dead from the war. They have an exhibit box that holds the artifacts used by soldiers including dog tags. The most interesting artifact is a death letter written by a soldier. It is a death letter to his parents. In the letter the soldier lets them know that he understands they will grieve the death of their only son. However, he hopes they will

¹⁴⁹ The US Center of Military History, "Awards and Decorations," Awards and Decorations: World War I Statistics, <http://www.history.army.mil/documents/wwi/23awd.htm> (accessed April 25, 2014).

continue to love each other and others. It is simply signed “son.”¹⁵⁰ The artifact makes a big emotional impact on the visitor and humanizes the men killed so long ago.

The National World War I Museum also finds ways to represent death without showing bodies. The Paul Sunderland Bridge is a perfect example. The walkway connects the entrance to the exhibit hall. The bridge is made of glass, and visible below are nine thousand poppies. Each one represents one thousand combatant deaths during the war. Right from the beginning the museum conveys the sheer number of dead, without having to show any blood.

Overall, all four museums focus more on commemoration of the American soldier than showing the reality of their sacrifices. Death is the product of war. Soldiers’ deaths represent military successes or losses, while civilian deaths are a tragedy. There are several people who believe museums do not do enough to show the horrors of war. Elizabeth Cafer du Plessis argues in her review “The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial” that the museum takes a “family-friendly approach, the museum neither pushes pacifism nor glorifies war, and it forgoes violent images.”¹⁵¹ This is simply not true, for violent images are everywhere; they just require more effort to see. In the Years 1914-1917 exhibit there is an entire section devoted to death. Above the cabinet is a large picture of a dead body, and there are several others throughout the exhibit. However, the curators do place the most violent images off to the side in order to make the museums appropriate for all ages. As noted before, in order to see the image a visitor must go around a corner into a side area. A visitor

¹⁵⁰ Wall text, *Life in the Trenches*, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas, September 19, 2013.

¹⁵¹ Plessis, Elizabeth Cafer du, “The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial” *The Journal of American History*; (Dec 2007) 94, 3, 897.

also has to look straight up, something that is not usually expected in a museum and easily missed, especially by a child.

Commemorating the dead was a difficult task immediately after the war and even a century later. A modern museum must tread carefully between the line of education and reverence for the dead. This is complicated for military museums because they are regulated on a deeper level than private museums. Museums use a variety of methods to talk about death including paintings, photographs, video, statistics, artifacts, and memorials. Overall, the museums are more graphic with the dead of the allies or enemies of America. When it comes to American soldiers the museums give them a “good death” by focusing on heroes and their sacrifices. It continues the myth of the American soldiers as strong, valorous, and brave. By focusing more on commemoration and this myth, the more violent aspects of World War I for American soldiers are excluded. Even as living memory turns into non-living memory this has not changed. It is doubtful that this will change in the foreseeable future.

Chapter 5 - European and American Memory in World War I

Americans integrated several British memories to shape their own understanding of World War I. They include the images of bandaged eyes of chemical weapon victims as well as depictions of “muddy bodies” in the trenches. Both American and British soldiers experienced the muddy trenches and chemical attacks. However, the British and other allies were in the trenches far longer than the Americans. They had time to form iconic myths and memories about the Great War. Americans, in contrast, came to the war long after the most enduring images of the war on the western front had been formed.

Bandaged Eyes: Chemical Warfare and the Body

The figure of a soldier wearing eye bandages after being blinded by chemical weapons remains as one of the most iconic images of World War I. An example is John Singer Sargent’s *Gassed*, a painting of a parade of American and British soldiers with bandaged eyes, hands on each other’s shoulders, walking through a group of men with similar bandages.¹⁵² The image of World War I soldiers with bandages over their eyes has also entered movies such as 1995’s *A Little Princess*. The father in the film is gassed in the trenches, loses his memory, and wears bandages over his eyes. This image has entered museums as well. All four museums have at least one representation either in the form of a photograph, print, or painting. Two other paintings among the exhibits show soldiers consumed by the gasses and writhing in pain. The images of soldiers’ bodies in conjunction with chemical warfare are overwhelmingly negative.

¹⁵² Russell, 39.

The formation of the memory surrounding this image occurred during the early years of the war. Chemical weapons had been used in previous conflicts. However, it was not until World War I that the technology developed to create casualties on a mass scale. Before the war Germany was the leader in chemical warfare both in terms of research and production. In 1915 at the battle of Ypres, Germans were the first to use chemical weapons. They deployed chlorine gas which killed 5,000 and wounded 10,000 Allied troops. Russell points out that the allied leaders already considered gas to be illegal because of the Hague Conventions and Declaration of 1899 when Germany agreed not to use “projectiles emitting asphyxiating gases or weapons” which caused unnecessary suffering.¹⁵³ Naturally when the Germans used the weapons the Allies used it as proof of the Central Powers’ cruel nature. The media and propagandists also used the image of poisonous gas to terrify and unite the Allies against the Germans.

There are several problems with using gas in warfare, all of which raise serious ethical concerns. A single gust of wind can send the gas over to civilian locations such as homes and schools (and into one’s own lines for that matter).¹⁵⁴ Also, the very idea of gasses slowly seeping along the ground poisoning anyone in its way disturbed the public’s imagination. In the end the gasses killed ninety thousand people and wounded 1.3 million people.¹⁵⁵ Gas attacks killed about two percent of Americans with whom it came in contact.¹⁵⁶ Chemical warfare continued to be controversial long after World War I. The topic

¹⁵³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 40.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 28.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 39.

of Agent Orange, the deforesting agent used in Vietnam, was so provocative the Chemical Corps Museum did not even address it for years on orders from a Commanding General.¹⁵⁷

What is interesting about the memory of chemical warfare is that it actually countermands the reality. The weapons were intended to end the stalemate by forcing people out of the trenches and into close combat. In the end it was supposed to help the war end faster. Military leaders in World War I actually preferred the use of chemicals because it created massive numbers of wounded, not massive numbers of the dead.¹⁵⁸ More importantly a single casualty forced several healthy soldiers to carry the wounded one to an aid station at the back of the formation. This type of casualty hurt military readiness by forcing healthy soldiers away from the fighting.¹⁵⁹ Other methods like artillery were used to the same effectiveness. This is a message that the Chemical Corps Museum is attempting to emphasize in order to counteract the memory.¹⁶⁰ However, this process is only in the beginning stages, and, as mentioned in an interview with the director Mr. Lindberg, it is not as yet reflected in the exhibits. The idea that chemical warfare is not always about death and can in some incidences be more humane than guns will take years to change.

Up until recently all four museums portrayed a similar image of chemical warfare, that of photographs that show soldiers convalescing at aid stations. At the 1st Infantry Division Museum at Fort Riley the image hangs in the exhibit titled “Healthcare/Influenza.” One image shows medical corpsmen helping soldiers with bandages over their eyes out of an ambulance. The other photograph shows members of the medical corps with two stretchers and an ambulance in the background. It is impossible to see one of the men in stretchers, but

¹⁵⁷ Kip Lindberg, interview by author, August 23, 2013.

¹⁵⁸ Russell, 39.

¹⁵⁹ Kip Lindberg, interview by author, August 23, 2013.

¹⁶⁰ Kip Lindberg, interview by author, August 23, 2013.

the other has bandages over his eyes. At the Cantigny Museum poisonous gas receives its own exhibit case. The display looks briefly at the rise of chemical weapons at the beginning of the war, but it spends most of the time looking at it from the American point of view. It talks about how the soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division received “more casualties in the Ansauville and Cantigny sectors as a result of gas than small arms or artillery fire.”¹⁶¹ The photograph that accompanies the text shows four soldiers who had just arrived at Field Hospital #3 in Froissy, France, in May of 1918. The text below the photograph talks about how hospitals were overwhelmed with the casualties. It also talks about how the gasses caused blindness and burning of the lungs that could leave permanent damage.



Figure 1. "WWI Gas Attack-Ypres," Circa 1957, Unknown Artist, U.S. Army Chemical Corps Museum.

Two pictures continue with a dramatic portrayal of chemical warfare. One is a print titled “I have assumed command!” It depicts Captain Huebner of the 2d, 28th Infantry Regiment of the First Division at Cantigny, France on May 28, 1918. The work is by famous military artist James Dietz. A large print of the work hangs at the entrance to the museum and a smaller version is in one of the exhibits. It portrays the Battle of Cantigny with explosions,

¹⁶¹ Wall text, *A First Encounter*, First Infantry Division Museum at Cantigny, Wheaton, IL, July 9, 2013.

close combat, and it captures the chaos of war. Throughout the entire print a mist hovers around the ground. While this could be a mist or fog, it looks like poisonous gas. Poisonous gas was used at the Battle of Cantigny as well as several other battles in which the Americans participated. The second is a painting that hangs in the Chemical Corps Museum. The painting is titled “WWI Gas Attack-Ypres” by an unknown artist (Figure 1). As of August 2013 it hung in the first exhibit case in the center. Surrounding it was information about chemical warfare including statistics and artifacts. It is acrylic on fiberboard and is dated by the curator to around 1957. It was not accessioned as an artifact, but it is part of the museum property.¹⁶² The painting, even to the amateur eye of a graduate student, is not artistically significant. However, the content is fascinating. It shows British soldiers reacting to the first chemical attack at the Battle of Ypres. Men are covering their eyes, choking, and writhing in agony. It captures the true horror of chemical warfare. It is very interesting that a painting such as this is in a museum that is focused on the American story of World War I since the battle took place years before the American involvement in the war. This suggests that the limited time the Americans spent in the war caused them to be influenced by British myths and memories.

Muddy Trenches and the Body

The muddy trenches are one of the most iconic myths of World War I. The trenches were only meant to be temporary at the beginning of the war. They were used to protect soldiers from enemy weapons. John Ellis in his book *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I* cites the beginning of trench warfare from September 1914 “when the German VII Reserve Corps turned around on the Chemin des Dames Ridge and blocked the advance

¹⁶² Cynthia Riley, email to author, October 23, 2013.

of the British I Corps.”¹⁶³ The Germans decided to build up their defenses and let the British exhaust themselves trying to break through. Three months later the defensive line ran from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier.¹⁶⁴ After the three months trenches were used for the remainder of the war with only small gains. However, in the last few months of the war the Allied soldiers were able to make larger gains through the trenches and defeat the Central Powers.

The iconic trench is one that is dug deep in the ground full of rats and mud. However, John Keegan points out in his book *The First World War* that “there was no standard trench system.”¹⁶⁵ In areas where the water table was high the trenches were built above ground. These were called box trenches and were only a few feet deep. The rest was a wall of wood and sandbags.¹⁶⁶ Other trenches become so elaborate they included little windows and wallpaper to make it feel more like a home.¹⁶⁷ These types of trenches are not shown in any of the four World War I museums.

The trenches that are most present in the myth are ones where the water table was not so close to the surface. These trenches were in places like Flanders, the Somme valley, and the Argonne, etc. The front of the trench was called the parapet and was quite high, several feet high. It was covered in stacked sandbags. There was a ledge built in close to the bottom called a fire step where a soldier could step up and fire over the parapet.¹⁶⁸ The back of the trench was also covered in sandbags to keep the wall of dirt stable. Trenches were also never

¹⁶³ John Ellis. *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 10.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Keegan, 176.

¹⁶⁶ Ellis, 12.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

in straight lines, but broken into small sections.¹⁶⁹ They were so complicated that special guides were needed to navigate the lines. These are the only types of trenches depicted in the museums.

Each of the four museums studied used a full-scale model of a trench in their exhibits, further solidifying the myth of trench warfare as the most prevalent form of warfare for the American soldier. They wind through the exhibit space in an attempt to immerse the visitor. At the Chemical Corps Museum the long trench changes periodically. At the beginning of the exhibit the trench looks like it was quickly built. As the exhibit progresses the trench becomes more elaborate and ends with metal walls. It is an attempt to show how trenches changed from the beginning of the war to the end.¹⁷⁰ It is interesting that the exhibit that is almost solely based on the American experience in the war would show types of trenches American soldiers never experienced. The exhibit at the 1st Infantry Division has the shortest trench. It has what appear to be large sticks stacked up higher than a man's head. The top of the trench is lined in sandbags. The trench at the Cantigny museum is the most elaborate. It spans the entire World War I exhibit from the start of the town into an underground section with bunks. The biggest difference between the National World War I exhibits compared to the others is that a visitor cannot walk through the trench exhibits. A visitor can see into a recreated trench in the first half of the exhibit. In the middle exhibit is an elaborate portrayal of war on the ground level with men slogging through trenches. The visitors overlook the events from a balcony while watching a video talk about the progress of the war and the Americans joining the Allies. However, the visitor is more of a witness to the events and not a "participant" experiencing the trenches.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Kip Lindberg, interview by author, August 23, 2013.

There is another important difference among the museums. In the Chemical Corps and 1st Infantry Museums there are no bodies present in the trenches. There are artifacts that suggest men were there, but no mannequins or photographs are present. For example at the Chemical Corps Museum there is a section that represents a command area. There is a map on the wall, a telephone, and a place for homing pigeons. The seat is empty and is staged as though someone just left. Later in the exhibit there is an aid station with bunks built in. Farther down is a wall with comics and news clippings pinned on it. They talk about life in the Army and are chemical specific. One example reads “Anti-Gas Paste Now Ready For Issue to A.E.F.” The comics make fun of the Germans and encourage the purchase of war bonds. It is almost as though the visitors are both the witnesses and the participants at the same time. There are also no bodies at the 1st Infantry Division at all. However, this is probably because there is not enough space to include a mannequin or artifacts.

If there is a lack of bodies in the military museums, there is a plethora in the private museums. Interestingly the bodies at the Cantigny Museum are all American. They only show the Americans attempting to storm the enemy trench, which incidentally is the one the visitors are walking in. The National World War I museum mannequins and photographs from all participants of the war are shown in the trenches. The museums go into detail on the different experiences in British, French, and German trenches. They have photographs of Germans working on artillery in a trench and of two French soldiers carrying a comrade to an aid station. The difference in the portrayal of bodies in the exhibits is distinctive between the military museums and the private museums. It could simply be a situation of cost since mannequins are expensive. However, the lack of photographs in the military museums’ trench exhibits is striking. It is as though the museums want the visitor to witness the war as

if they are a direct participant. However, without the bodies it takes away any sense of danger and feels hauntingly empty.

The conditions of the trench are one of the most vivid parts of the World War I memory. In fact the muddy, soggy, rat infested trenches that dominate the World War I memory were in Flanders, Ypres, and Somme to name a few. All of these battles were before American involvement. From the beginning of the war, rain was almost constant. Ellis points out that between October 1914 and March 1915 there were only “eighteen dry days” and in March 1916 rainfall “was the heaviest in thirty-five years.”¹⁷¹ The rain filled the trenches with mud. Moving became difficult, and wounded men literally drowned in it. By the time the Americans joined the war the stalemated trench warfare was largely over.¹⁷² While there were still trenches, there was significantly more movement. The 1st Infantry Museum at Fort Riley describes it best as “dark, dreary, lice-ridden, wet and muddy.”¹⁷³ The Chemical Corps Museum says the “bottoms of the trenches often filled with water soon turned to liquid mud.”¹⁷⁴ The men suffered in a “measureless bog of military rubble, shattered houses, and tree stumps.”¹⁷⁵ The National World War I museum has an exhibit called the “Long Grave” that described the trench as “a place of despair, a narrow ditch that reeked of stinking mud, decay and death.”¹⁷⁶ These miserable conditions are one of the main memories of World War I and are a symbol of the futility of the war. Photographs and paintings of men slogging

¹⁷¹ Ellis, 45.

¹⁷² Alan Lloyd, *The War in the Trenches*, (London: Granada Publishing, 1976), 183.

¹⁷³ Wall text, *Life in the Trenches*, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas, September 19, 2013.

¹⁷⁴ Wall text, *Life in the Trenches*, Chemical Corps Museum, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, August 23, 2013.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Wall text, *The Long Grave*, National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, November 10, 2013.

through the trenches are seen throughout popular culture. Websites, movies, and television shows focus on this aspect of the war. The other museums follow the same memory. They make their trenches dark and muddy. All the trench exhibits are dimly lit as though it is night. Flashes of lights are used to represent artillery fire. With the black and white photographs it seems the war was fought primarily in the dark. It keeps the mood sullen and depressing. All the museums also treat their floors to look like mud, and even the mannequins are covered in fake mud.

Of course the trenches were primarily on the Western Front and were not always so muddy. The 1st Infantry Division museum acknowledges this and mentions some areas were “dry and dusty.”¹⁷⁷ Soldiers on the Western Front also did not spend all their time in the trenches. In a month a soldier would spend time in the trenches, in reserve, and the rest behind the lines.¹⁷⁸ Of course with battle the schedule was not always predictable. Also, trenches varied depending on location. While there were trenches that matched the iconic memory, it was not a universal experience across the Western Front. For Americans, the trenches were only a small part of the war experience. American soldiers fought in wooded and urban areas. In essence the Americans experienced the harsh conditions of the trenches, but not to the same extent as their allies.

Three out of four museums focus exclusively on the American experiences in the trenches. This is problematic because the American forces did not participate in the trenches for as long as the British, French, or Germans. Americans did serve in the trenches for several battles including Cantigny and St. Mihiel. However, they also fought battles in towns,

¹⁷⁷ Wall text, *Life in the Trenches*, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas, September 19, 2013.

¹⁷⁸ Ellis, 27.

valleys, and forests like Belleau Wood and Meuse-Argonne. It is fascinating that the exhibits go into great detail about the horrible experiences of the trenches. It is as though the Americans had suffered to the same extent as their allies which is untrue. This suggests that the American museums have adopted the myth of the trenches as an icon of World War I from their allies in the war. This is problematic because it downplays the diverse experiences of American soldiers. But it is probably fair to say that all the museums devote considerable attention to the trenches because they became the central image of the war. Without trench exhibits, the exhibits of these four museums would not be so clearly marked as “World War I.”

The last two sections raises the question of what should the American memory look like in a museum. When the museum exhibits are based on the American experience there is more of a variety of locations. While the trench is present in the exhibit, it is not the main focus. Instead there are burned out buildings, churches, fields, and forests. There would also be more of a focus on how the Americans participated as newcomers to this long running global conflict. The Americans only were only in the war for a short period and this should be reflected in the exhibit. While this is what happens in the National World War I Museum, the other museums only gloss over the previous four years.

Conclusion

In peeling back multiple issues in four American museums, one can see that exhibits have been significantly influenced by memory. The first question raised in this study was how the death of the actual participants of World War I has, or has not, changed the exhibits. There is no simple answer to this question. The museum scripts studied here were all written within the last quarter century, at a moment when the number of surviving veterans was already quite low, and it is therefore difficult to see how much of the exhibits' scripts were written with those veterans in mind. A much more definitive conclusion might be reached if one could study World War I over a much longer period of time. In that regard, the change in the scripts of the Imperial War Museum in London from the time of its opening in 1917 to the present would make an excellent project. It would also be interesting to revisit the four museums studied here in a decade or two to see how the exhibits examined have developed. It could also be interesting to see how memory influences the portrayal of other wars in museums. It would not be surprising, for example, to find that the experiences of the so-called "greatest generation" in World War II significantly color the history that World War II museums are free to display. Indeed, the 1995 Enola Gay exhibit demonstrates that already. In a different fashion, museums displays of the Vietnam War are afflicted by almost the opposite problem, a shameful memory of loss.

A second question was whether the museums' exhibits were influenced by the latest historiography, particularly the recent emphasis upon social history. Certainly, the four museums demonstrated a greater inclusion of civilian voices,. In addition, the exhibits do "show" killing and wounded bodies.

This study also demonstrated that depicting violence is still problematic. Overall there is a conscious limitation of portrayals of violence in exhibit; if anything, the museums are evasive about the violent nature of war. Naturally the staffs of the different museums worry about appropriateness for the general public. However, what is really intriguing is that the two military museums are also worried how current soldiers would react to violent images. The curators do not want to “re-traumatize”, which is understandable especially with the recent awareness of PTSD. Museums do not want to show violent images to soldiers just returning from war zones (although with the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan ending this explanation is rather dated). Perhaps a more reasonable explanation is that the military museums view all soldiers as participants of an experience, war, only shared directly by soldiers. Museum curators understand and respect the violence the soldiers have witnessed and do not feel showing it is necessary. But violence is shown; it is simply that it is mostly confined to the bodies of non-Americans. The actual act of killing the enemy is portrayed in many different ways including video, painting, and audio. The bodies of enemy dead or allied soldiers are also throughout several of the exhibits. The violent portrayal of these “others” is somewhat surprising. Some of these images are incredibly graphic and depict bodies rotting in trenches or being stabbed by a bayonet. However, showing these images allows the museums to talk about the violence of war without compromising the memorialization of Americans soldiers.

The third issue is that American museums borrow heavily from the British experience. Naturally their memory is far more extensive since the British participated for forty-eight months as opposed to the Americans, who only were deployed for nineteen. The images of the muddy trenches and bandaged eyes affected many more British soldiers and

families than Americans. The Americans forces did not only fight in trenches, but in forests and villages such as Cantigny and Belleau Wood. However, the British images and myths are the ones the American public expects. This is probably because the Americans were in the war for such a short time. They did not have the time to create a wide range of myths, which caused them to borrow the British myths. What is interesting is that the American museums are reinforcing these myths and raise the trenches to an *American* iconography without fully portraying the American experience. This can be a problem because myths can take simplification too far and ignore facts. However, it also shows the power of popular memory. The icon of the trenches is so powerful it turns a war exhibit into a “World War I exhibit.”

Finally, the American soldier is only portrayed in a way that coincides with popular memory. The popular memory of the American soldier is one who is strong, virile, and victorious. The museums are full of pictures of healthy American soldiers training, charging, and even relaxing between battles. While they are shown wounded there is not violent portrayal of their death. Instead there are artifacts such as dog tags and letters home to parents to discuss the topic. The museums do not talk about the more unsavory aspects of the war that counter this images such as venereal disease or desertion. This can be a problem because it ignores real stories of soldiers who did not act heroically or even simply supported the combat missions. It also elevates the American soldier to an iconic status that is hard to attain in reality. Finally, it shows that the cultural memory has a hold not only in the American imagination, but in American museums as well.

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