

Memories in stone and ink:
How the United States used war memorials and soldier poetry to Commemorate the Great War

by

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B.A., Mary Washington College, 2004
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Abstract

War occupies an important place in the collective memory of the United States, with many of its defining moments centered on times of intense trauma. American memory of World War I, however, pales in comparison to the Civil War and World War II, which has led to the conflict's categorization as a "forgotten" war—terminology that ignores the widespread commemorative efforts undertaken by Americans in the war's aftermath. In fact, the interwar period witnessed a multitude of memorialization projects, ranging from architectural memorials to literature.

It is this dichotomy between contemporary understanding and the reality of the conflict's aftermath that is at the heart of this study, which seeks to illuminate the prominent position held by the First World War in early twentieth century American society. The dissertation examines three war memorials: the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri; the District of Columbia World War Memorial in West Potomac Park, Washington, D.C.; and Kansas State University's Memorial Stadium in Manhattan, Kansas. The work also analyzes seven volumes of soldier poetry, published between 1916 and 1921: *Poems*, by Alan Seeger; *With the Armies of France*, by William Cary Sanger, Jr.; *Echoes of France: Verses from my Journal and Letters, March 14, 1918 to July 14, 1919 and Afterwards*, by Amy Robbins Ware; *The Tempering*, by Howard Swazey Buck; *Wampum and Old Gold*, by Hervey Allen; *The Log of the Devil Dog and Other Verses*, by Byron H. Comstock; and *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, by Lee Charles McCollum.

Despite the presence of some thematic similarities between the two modes of remembrance, each mode had different objectives and audiences, contributing to the creation of distinct and competing forms of collective memory regarding American involvement in the Great

War. Taken together, the two modes provide a more complete picture of American memorialization to World War I than if studied independently. This interdisciplinary approach to understanding commemorative efforts during the interwar period is vital to understanding the war and its legacy, and thus beneficial to both historical scholarship and the public.

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Approved by:

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my history teachers and professors, without whom I would not be the historian I am today.

Introduction

On December 3, 2009, Frank Buckles, America's sole surviving veteran of the First World War, appeared before Congress in support of a bill cosponsored by Senator Richard Burr (R-NC). Known as the Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act, it called for the renovation and rededication of the District of Columbia War Memorial as a national World War I memorial, filling a "void" on the National Mall. The veteran's presence was largely symbolic, as he spoke only briefly, remarking that he thought the memorial "an excellent idea." The following November, however, Buckles delivered a lengthier commentary regarding the proposed legislation:

We still do not have a national memorial in Washington, D.C. to honor the Americans who sacrificed with their lives during World War I. On this eve of Veterans Day, I call upon the American people and the world to help me in asking our elected officials to pass the law for a memorial to World War I in our nation's capital. These are difficult [economic] times, and we are not asking for anything elaborate. What is fitting and right is a memorial that can take its place among those commemorating the other great conflicts of the past century. On this 92nd anniversary of the armistice, it is time to move forward with honor, gratitude, and resolve.¹

On the surface, Buckles's heartfelt plea appears just that; as the last member of his generation, he sought national recognition for the service and sacrifice of his fellow soldiers, who, Buckles implies, have been forgotten. As this study will demonstrate, the assumption that no one has remembered World War I is misleading. Indeed, if one looks closer, several things

¹ Vicki Smith, "Last U.S. WWI Vet Seeks D.C. Memorial for Fellow Vets," *Washington Times*, November 10, 2010, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/nov/10/last-us-wwi-vet-seeks-dc-memorial-fellow-vets/>. The 2009 congressional session Buckles appeared at can be found at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg55478/pdf/CHRG-111shrg55478.pdf> (discussion begins on page 4).

about agitation for a national memorial to World War I on the mall become evident. First, the suggestion to rededicate the D.C. War Memorial completely ignores, or attempts to marginalize, its significance as a local memorial—the *only* local memorial constructed on the National Mall. Second, Buckles and his supporters ignored, or failed to consider, the existence of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Built to honor those American soldiers who died during World War I without their remains being identified and dedicated on Armistice Day 1921 by President Warren Harding, the tomb was perceived as a national shrine as well as the embodiment of the “national spirit” and the “imperishable” sacrifice of all those who served.² And finally, the proposed legislation gave no thought to the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, home to the National World War I Museum, thus igniting a fierce rivalry between the two cities.³ The absence of discussion regarding these factors, at least at the outset, suggests that those involved believed the National Mall, and the National Mall alone, is central to the nation’s collective remembrance and that therefore a “true” national memorial to the First World War must be located there.

This emphasis on one national memorial, located in a space of national significance stands in contrast to the efforts undertaken by European nations. As Jay Winter points out in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, where he reexamines the culture of commemoration and the ways in which communities endeavored to

² G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1995), 117. For more information on World War I unknowns and the events surrounding the construction of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, see Neil Hanson, *Unknown Soldiers: The Story of the Missing of the First World War* (New York: Vintage, 2005).

³ Representative Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) raised this very question during the 2009 congressional session, attesting (as museum staff do) to the site’s national status, which they date to the memorial’s 1926 dedication. This question of the memorial’s national status, and the rivalry between the two cities will be addressed further in Chapter 1 and the conclusion.

find collective solace after 1918, war memorials are part of the physical landscape. One need only look around, particularly in Great Britain and France, to find the “visible signs of this moment [1914 and after] of collective bereavement.”⁴ They encompass objects from the mundane to the elaborate, from the useful to the decorative, and range from the national to the local. Take, for example, Great Britain. The Cenotaph in London, initially erected as a temporary memorial in 1919, became “the permanent and imperial symbol of the wrenching losses of the Great War,” a place where Britons observed a two-minute silence every Remembrance Day (November 11) in memory of those lost during the war.⁵ Compare this to the thousands of memorials erected in towns and cities commissioned by local community leaders, with little to no state involvement. France also experienced a memorialization dichotomy; private bereavement centered on deep personal grief, and the state’s erection of unifying national symbols aimed at consoling the bereaved and creating a public cult of the dead.⁶

While British and French memorialization of the First World War remains visible today, the same cannot be said of Russia and Germany. Before the Russian Revolution, the Imperial government and ordinary Russians planned for and created memorial sites for the war dead. With the Bolshevik takeover and subsequent formation of the Soviet Union, however, a popular cult of the war dead was not tolerated, nor did the new regime allow for spontaneous commemoration in

⁴ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79.

⁵ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 141.

⁶ For more information, see Remi Dalisson and Elise Julien, “Bereavement and Mourning: Commemoration and Cult of the Fallen (France), in *1914–1918 online. An International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_commemoration_and_cult_of_the_fallen_france.

the same way as their counterparts in Europe and North America.⁷ In Germany, the erection of monuments (local and national) and the activities of war veterans' organizations were among the most visible methods of commemoration; often politicized, these methods of remembrance rarely created unified mourning during the Weimar Republic. The number of German monuments increased significantly during the 1930s, but given their construction by the Nazi regime, were focused on German heroism, conservative nationalism, and masculinity.⁸ In both countries, the experience of the Second World War overpowered that of the First, leaving commemorative evidence of the latter severely minimized and forgotten, or destroyed.

Despite their differences, the countries examined above all sought to come to terms with the profound level of loss they experienced during the First World War. This is also true for the United States, whose battlefield experience and losses matched the intensity, though not the duration, of the Europeans. The interwar period witnessed a multitude of memorialization projects, ranging from architectural memorials to literature. It is this dichotomy between contemporary understanding and the reality of the conflict's aftermath that is at the heart of this study, where I seek to illuminate the prominent position held by the First World War in early twentieth century American society. To do this, I will first examine three war memorials: the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri; the District of Columbia World War Memorial in

⁷ For more information, see Aaron Cohen, "Commemoration, Cult of the Fallen (Russian Empire)," in *1914–1918 online. An International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/commemoration_cult_of_the_fallen_russian_empire.

⁸ For more information, see Nadine Rossol, "Commemoration, Cult of the Fallen (Germany)," in *1914–1918 online. An International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/commemoration_cult_of_the_fallen_germany, and Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance, and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The information presented in this and the previous paragraph are a summary, to provide context to the discussion. In the future, this will be expanded into a larger section.

West Potomac Park, Washington, D.C.; and Kansas State University's Memorial Stadium in Manhattan, Kansas. I will then analyze seven volumes of soldier poetry, published between 1916 and 1921: *Poems*, by Alan Seeger; *With the Armies of France*, by William Cary Sanger, Jr.; *Echoes of France: Verses from my Journal and Letters, March 14, 1918 to July 14, 1919 and Afterwards*, by Amy Robbins Ware; *The Tempering*, by Howard Swazey Buck; *Wampum and Old Gold*, by Hervey Allen; *The Log of the Devil Dog and Other Verses*, by Byron H. Comstock; and *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, by Lee Charles McCollum. Despite the presence of some thematic similarities between the two modes of remembrance, my central argument is that each had different objectives and audiences, thus contributing to the creation of distinct and competing forms of collective memory regarding American involvement in the Great War.

The various modes of memorialization discussed in this study are not considered among those who now argue, as Buckles did, that there must be a national memorial and it must be in Washington, D.C. It is not surprising that current discussion regarding World War I commemoration would focus on the national, at the expense of the local, as the capital is symbolic of national memorialization. Erika Doss's *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, which examines the recent obsession with memory and the resurgence of attention to monuments and memorials, asserts that "No American city better embodies these conditions of memorial mania than the nation's capital," a statement supported by even a cursory stroll around the National Mall and its immediate environs.⁹ Moreover, if one examines the memorials west of the Washington Monument, all reflect a common thematic element: war. In *Remembering War the American Way*, which offered (at the time of its publication) a fundamentally different interpretation of how Americans have sought to remember war from the Revolutionary War to

⁹ Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 17.

the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Kurt Piehler argues, “War has played a decisive role in shaping the development of American society,” and so the American national identity “remains inexorably intertwined with the commemoration and memory of past wars.”¹⁰ Visiting the Mall, home to several national war memorials, is thus central to understanding a particular version of American historical development as well as these memorials’ suggestion about what it means to be an American. For Buckles and his supporters, then, the *absence* of a national memorial to World War I on the Mall only reinforces the popular notion of World War I as a “forgotten” war in American history because that war is a missing element in the national story that the Mall presents.

This line of reasoning is flawed, however. It fails to consider two things; first, that construction or designation of national memorials on the Mall is a relatively recent phenomenon, and two, that national memorials exist beyond the National Mall.¹¹ Even the term “national memorial” is a recent concept, applied by the National Park Service with congressional authorization to an area that memorializes a historic person or event. Many Americans would likely be surprised to learn that of the twenty-nine officially designated national memorials, only eleven are in D.C., the rest spread across fourteen states.

This is not to say that a national memorial to World War I was never considered. As discussed above, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was understood by Americans to be a nationally significant site and symbolic of the country’s collective grief regarding the war. Beyond this, or perhaps because of this, additional proposals for a national memorial were

¹⁰ Piehler, Preface; 2–3.

¹¹ One must consider that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier lies in Arlington National Cemetery and so perhaps is more associated with the concept of a national cemetery than a national memorial.

rejected. Although the federal government had sponsored the establishment of national cemeteries, monuments, and holidays after the Civil War, these often reflected local, state, and regional interests.¹² Not until after Vietnam did Congress authorize construction of a national memorial on the Mall specifically addressing a war, one that despite initial aesthetic controversies, helped heal the wounds brought on by a divisive war. This in turn sparked the creation of the Korean War Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated in 1995 and stands directly opposite the Vietnam wall. The completion of that memorial coincided with renewed scholarly and popular interest in World War II (due to the publication of veterans' memoirs and fifty-year commemorative initiatives), and contributed to the ultimate dedication of a national memorial to that conflict in 2004.

In this commemorative landscape, then, World War I appears (as Buckles argued) forgotten. Historians Meirion and Susie Harries offer their opinion on why this public sentiment exists in the introduction of *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917–1918*. Published on the eightieth anniversary of American entry into the Great War, they note the oft-cited overshadowing of the conflict by the Second World War while also emphasizing the importance of emotion in making America's collective memory selective: "America went to fight in 1917 with an innocent determination to remake the world; the nation emerged in November 1918 with its sense of purpose shattered, with its certainties shaken, and with a new and unwelcome self-knowledge. Many Americans wanted to turn their backs on the war almost from the moment it ended."¹³ While this last sentence is an oversimplification of a complex reality, the Harries are

¹² Piehler successfully illustrates this in *Remembering War the American Way*.

¹³ Meirion and Susie Harries, *The Last Days of American Innocence: America at War, 1917–1918* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 7.

correct to highlight the war's muddled legacy and inability to compete with the positivity associated with World War II.

The long-standing opinion of World War I's forgotten status is best illustrated, however, by Steven Trout in the final chapter of his influential work, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919–1941*, in which he argues that although American memory of the war was fractured and unsettled, the First World War was far from a forgotten conflict during the interwar period. Acknowledging that “By the early 1950s, American World War I veterans already seemed sidelined by history,” Trout points to the 1970s and 1980s as the period when

a mournful tone became somewhat standard, along with the venting of frustration over the First World War's ignominious neglect.... Now conceived of as utterly moribund, in terms of its once vital presence in collective memory, the American experience of World War I became inseparable from adjectives like ‘lost,’ ‘invisible,’ or ‘forgotten.’¹⁴

There were, to be sure, several notable studies completed during this period and the years that followed. Works such as David Kennedy's *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (1980, reprint 2004), Jennifer Keene's *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (2001), Mark Grotelueschen's *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (2006), and Mark Levitch's *Pantheon de la Guerre: Reconfiguring a Panorama of the Great War* (2006), all greatly enhanced our understanding of the United States' experience during and after the First World War. When Frank Buckles was recognized as the last surviving doughboy in early 2008, however, some historians working in the field “indulged in the now-

¹⁴ Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919–1941* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 248.

familiar trope of World War I as America's unknown or forgotten war." For example, in the preface of his 2008 history of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, Edward Lengel sadly notes that, in comparison to his Civil War and World War II counterparts, the "Doughboy has been forgotten." And Mark Snell's 2008 *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance*, while an important contribution to the fields of military history and memory of the Great War, nonetheless works from the assumption that "the problem with the American memory of World War I, is that there seems to be none."¹⁵

Though Snell and Lengel were speaking to the public memory of the war, rather than interest within academia, it nonetheless seems more than a little ironic that two monographs dedicated to the examination of American participation in World War I would perpetuate the claim that the war has been forgotten. In making such statements, Lengel and Snell fail to consider several things, the first being the role that Great War memorials play in American communities. Memorial Stadium, for example, has continuously served the Kansas State University community since its construction in the 1920s, even after the football team relocated to what is now Bill Snyder Family Stadium in 1968. In the 1990s, when college officials suggested constructing a parking garage on the stadium's field (the basic limestone structure would remain) as part of the plans for a new alumni center, the campus community rejected this outright, a testament to Memorial Stadium's historic importance. A similar continuity can be seen with the D.C. World War Memorial. Though perhaps somewhat overshadowed by later additions to the National Mall (such as the Jefferson Memorial and the national memorials to

¹⁵ Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*, 249–50; Edward G. Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918. The Epic Battle That Ended the First World War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 4; Mark Snell, *Unknown Soldiers: The American Expeditionary Forces in Memory and Remembrance* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008), xv.

Vietnam, Korea, and World War II), the Doric-style bandstand remained the site of outdoor concerts and holiday events, particularly Veterans Day.

The two historians' comments also appear at odds with events in Kansas City on two occasions prior to their publications. Despite decades of physical deterioration and closure in 1994, the Liberty Memorial remained a central feature of Kansas City's landscape. Ultimately, the structure was not only revitalized, but an 80,000-square-foot museum was constructed underneath, changes not possible without the long-standing interest and dedication to the memorial and its history among Kansas Citians. The National World War I Museum opened at this site in 2006, allowing visitors to view the vast number of objects and documents collected by the Liberty Memorial Association since the 1920s. None other than Frank Buckles visited the site on Memorial Day 2008, an event that drew national public attention in the same year Lengel's and Snell's studies came out.¹⁶

Since 2008 public interest in World War I has increased, arguably motivated in part by the national attention showered upon Frank Buckles from 2008 until his death in April 2011. Buckles alone, however, did not provide the public with reason to learn more about the First World War. The National World War I Museum (since 2014, the National World War I Museum and Memorial) is not only one of the top tourist attractions in the region but is also renowned throughout the country, with over two million visitors since opening in 2006. Since 2014, the museum has hosted an annual centennial symposium, bringing in both American and international scholars to present an array of material to diverse audiences numbering in the hundreds. Outside Kansas City, other museums and related institutions have also hosted exhibitions, events, and symposiums. One of the more notable exhibitions is "World War I and

¹⁶ Information taken from the museum's website, <https://www.theworldwar.org/explore/museum-and-memorial>.

American Art,” the first major exhibition devoted to exploring the ways in which American artists responded to the First World War. Debuting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in November 2016, the exhibition also traveled to the New-York Historical Society and the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville. Similar, though smaller, exhibits also appeared at institutions such as the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville, Florida and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.¹⁷

It is not only museums that give the American public an opportunity to enhance their knowledge of World War I. In 2012, inspired by his inability to locate a memorial he was researching and the poor condition of those he did come across, art historian Mark Levitch established the World War I Memorial Inventory Project. The project enables the public “to participate directly in locating, documenting, and providing a preliminary condition assessment of all of the World War I memorials and monuments in the United States [estimated at over 10,000]” while also offering “an unparalleled opportunity to educate Americans—especially schoolchildren—about the historic significance of the First World War.”¹⁸ Similarly, the World War I Centennial Commission, headquartered in Washington, D.C., implemented a program called “100 Cities/100 Memorials” in 2016, helping communities across the country identify and conserve their war memorials while also sponsoring a variety of educational programs and events to raise awareness about American involvement in the Great War. Their primary

¹⁷ Information on “World War I and American Art” exhibition retrieved from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts website, <https://www.pafa.org/exhibitions/world-war-i-and-american-art>. The Cummer hosted “Heroes and Battlefields: World War I Prints by James McBey” (December 2016–July 2017), and the Met hosted “World War I and the Visual Arts” (July 2017–January 2018).

¹⁸ World War I Memorial Inventory Project, “About the Project,” <http://ww1mproject.org/about-the-project>. See also, Michael E. Ruane, “A D.C. Historian is Hunting Down Forgotten Monuments in Memory of ‘the Great War,’” *Washington Post*, February 7, 2014 (cited in Chapter 2).

objective, however, remains the construction and dedication of the new national memorial advocated by Buckles, a subject addressed in the conclusion of this study.¹⁹

Recent academic trends parallel the activities of public institutions and organizations, with studies pertaining to the First World War published in the last ten years, but particularly since the onset of the centennial, too numerous to discuss in detail here. Many focus on the European perspective (though previously marginalized theaters are now receiving their just treatment), but historians have also tackled a variety of questions surrounding American involvement in the war. Some, such as Stephen Ortiz and Edward Lengel, have built upon previously existing scholarship. In *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, Ortiz reframed arguments made by Jennifer Keene regarding the role veterans played in postwar politics by reexamining veterans' issues and the political activism over them, creating a more complex depiction of the Bonus March-to-GI Bill narrative.²⁰ Lengel, after writing on the 1918 Meuse-Argonne campaign in *To Conquer Hell*, turned his attention to "recounting and analyzing the combat experiences of the American Expeditionary Forces between November 1917 and August 1918" in *Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917–1918*, a detailed and comprehensive study that is an important contribution to the history of the AEF and the American experience in France.²¹

Yet other scholars have sought to provide a more thorough understanding of the mindset and attitudes of the American doughboy, something Edward Coffman deemed impossible in his

¹⁹ Information derived from Commission website, <http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/about.html>.

²⁰ Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3–5.

²¹ Edward G. Lengel, *Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917–1918* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), viii.

1968 monograph, *The War to End All Wars*. Drawing upon questionnaires from Utah, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Virginia, Edward Gutiérrez’s *Doughboys on the Great War: How American Soldiers Viewed Their Military Experience*, examines the psyche of the doughboys, focusing not on battles or military strategy but “on American combatants’ conceptions of battle—before, during, and after the conflict.”²² And in the spirit of Bell Irvin Wiley’s *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*, in *Pershing’s Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I*, Richard Faulkner recounts “as comprehensively, detailed, and vividly as possible the daily lives, experiences, and attitudes of the American soldier and Marine in the Great War.”²³

Recent studies have also addressed the social, political, and cultural implications of American participation in the First World War. Through a reexamination of four American novels—*One of Ours*, *The Great Gatsby*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *Sartoris*—Pearl James’s *The New Death: American Modernism and World War I* illustrates how such works, despite their silence on the issue, were in fact centered on the American experience with modern, mechanized death. Working from the opposite end of the historical timeline, noted historian Michael Neiberg “tells the story of how Americans responded to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, how they dealt with their nation’s era of neutrality from 1914 to 1917, and how they finally saw the inescapable necessity of taking part in [World War I]” in *The Path to War: How the First World*

²² Edward Gutiérrez, *Doughboys on the Great War: How American Soldiers Viewed Their Military Experience* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014), 2.

²³ Richard S. Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 1–2.

War Created Modern America.²⁴ This approach allows readers to gain a deeper understanding regarding that generation's decision to go "Over There" while also demonstrating the war's long-term significance to American history.

Running parallel to historical studies on the First World War are publications pertaining to memory, commemoration, and remembrance, arguably sparked by Fussell's 1975 *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Breaking down the barrier between the literary study of war writing and the cultural history of war, the work is an "enduring account of the literary record of that moment in the midst of the Great War, when industrialization changed the character and killing power of war, when it became something monstrous, and when that monstrousness left a literary legacy which has endured to this day."²⁵ The burgeoning field of memory studies that followed Fussell largely emphasized the European perspective of the First World War, as seen in the work of Jay Winter, George Mosse, and Stefan Goebel.²⁶ Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, mentioned previously, has particularly served as an important historiographic model for the field since its publication in 1995. While recognizing Fussell's important contribution to the development of the field of memory, Winter breaks with his arguments, contending that the search for consolation by bereaved mourners prompted a revival of traditional modes of aesthetic expression. Thus, "far from discrediting the classical, romantic, and religious themes of the past, the traumatic experience of the war and the

²⁴ Michael S. Neiberg, *The Path to War: How the First World War Created Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

²⁵ Jay Winter, Introduction to the 2013 edition of Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii.

²⁶ The work of Mosse and Goebel is significant because of their analysis of German memory and memorialization. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*.

need to preserve the memory of those whom it had swept away reconnected the grieving postwar generation with the familiar, comforting cultural imagery of the past.”²⁷ Since publishing *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Winter has continued to influence the field of memory studies with works such as *Remembering War: The Great War between History and Memory in the 20th Century* (2006) and most recently, *War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present*.

Though not focused solely on World War I, several important studies emerged just prior to Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* that examined American memory and commemorative practices. These include Michael Kammen’s 1991 panoramic work of American cultural history, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, and John Bodnar’s 1992 *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, which explores the stories, ideas, and symbols behind American commemorations. Their work helped usher in a wave of scholarship covering subjects such as the Civil War, slavery, the National Mall, public history and memory, and terrorist attacks such as the Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11.²⁸ A more recent work that ties these and other elements together is Erika Doss’s previously cited work, *Memorial Mania*, which “explores the cultural, social, and political conditions that inform today’s urgent feelings about history and

²⁷ William R. Keylor, review of Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=550>.

²⁸ See, for example, David Blight’s *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, Kirk Savage’s *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*, James Oliver Horton’s *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History*, and Marita Sturken’s *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*.

memory,” tracing how “modern America’s obsession with commemoration developed and why it is so prevalent today.”²⁹

It is the previously discussed *Remembering War the American Way* and *On the Battlefield of Memory*, and indirectly, Lisa Budreau’s *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933*, however, that most influenced this study. Although examining different modes and methods of commemoration, all successfully demonstrate the prolific commemorative activities of Americans during the postwar period, thus lending support to this study’s assertion that traditional arguments regarding Americans’ widespread rejection of anything connected to the war are not in line with postwar reality. In illustrating how questions and debates surrounding how the war should be remembered permeated American society, culture, and politics well past the 1918 armistice, they also provide this work with a valuable framework of analysis. As Trout argues in *On the Battlefield of Memory*, “Neither Prohibition-era excess nor Depression-era hardship dulled the nation’s fascination with its first global conflict,” though, as this study will point out, the latter did, in some cases, create hurdles to memorialization efforts. Instead, what stands out is “the intensity with which Americans memorialized their war dead” through memorials (at home and in France) and war-related literature, film, and art.³⁰

This flurry of remembrance and commemoration, however, was marked by division. National leaders and organizations such as the newly-formed American Legion sought to create monuments (at home and abroad) and establish commemorative events as a means of concealing divisions and promoting national unity, but, as Kurt Piehler points out, “rancor engulfed efforts

²⁹ Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 13.

³⁰ Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*, 1.

to commemorate the First World War.”³¹ Although not the subject of this study, it is nonetheless helpful to point out that one facet of debate (and a heated one at that) arose over the burial place of America’s war dead, with the government ultimately adopting a democratic approach, allowing individual families to determine whether their loved ones would remain in France (in one of several national cemeteries established in the war’s aftermath) or return to the United States for burial at home. As Lisa Budreau argues in *Bodies of War*, however, this policy did little to promote national unity, encouraging instead “impassioned debate across America as to whether it was best to leave the deceased in foreign soil or to bring the bodies home for burial.”

The burial policy also contributed to a “mass diffusion of memory.” Unlike the concentration of Union dead in national cemeteries after the Civil War, most of America’s World War I dead lay scattered in local cemeteries across the United States, separated from their comrades buried in the American cemeteries overseas.³² As this study will illustrate, this diffusion of memory is also present in American memorialization efforts, with local memorials taking on greater significance than any proposed national memorials, directly contributing to the latter’s lack of advancement, save for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. There was thus a great deal of remembering, but that remembrance was local, rather than concentrated in one place.

Intense debate also occurred over the memorials constructed in both the United States and the cemeteries in France, with the discussion here focused on the former, given its direct bearing on this study. Despite the presence of other cultural commemorative practices—literature, art, and film, for example—the concept of a war memorial resonated strongly with

³¹ Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 94.

³² Lisa Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 15, 5. Budreau’s book follows the American response to this question in three stages: repatriation, remembrance, and return.

Americans, who, like their European brethren, sought answers to the meaning of the Great War. Differences in style or message certainly exist, but all, as Jay Winter illustrates in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, “were places where people grieved, both individually and collectively” and thus were the “foci of the rituals, rhetoric, and ceremonies of bereavement.”³³ The overwhelming presence of Civil War commemorative works, whether in public spaces or on former battlefields, speaks to the truth of this statement in American culture. It was that legacy, in fact, that provided the impetus for debate surrounding appropriate memorials to the Great War, a debate that perhaps not unlike the war itself, pitted old against new, traditional against modern.

On one side of the debate, progressive reformers, critical of what they viewed as the Civil War’s “dubious legacy in the form of useless and horrendous statues,” stressed living, or utilitarian, memorials as the best method of remembrance. These included bridges, parks (and related natural elements, such as trees), libraries, auditoriums, and stadiums. Proponents argued that such structures, termed “Liberty Buildings” or “Memorial Buildings,” should, and indeed would in time “contribute to the reconstruction of American society and meet the needs of communities.”³⁴ Their opponents, largely artists, art commissions, and art organizations, insisted that only traditional memorials centered on artistic expression could appropriately commemorate the First World War; this included anything from an architectural or sculptural structure to landscape art and paintings. While conceding that buildings could fit this description, they maintained that “beauty, not, utility, must be the standard by which war memorials are judged.” To accomplish this, organizations such as the American Federation of Arts and U.S. Commission

³³ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 78–79.

³⁴ Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 108. See also Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*, 107–09.

of Fine Arts (the latter charged in part by Congress to suggest appropriate “monuments and other memorials to commemorate the heroes and events of the great war”) advocated for serious deliberations via state and local public art commissions composed of professional artists. This, they believed, would not only prevent the rapid pace and poor design process symbolic of Civil War monuments but also allow for “the best and most beautiful memorials that can be designed, in forms which shall perpetuate for mankind the worth and beauty of their sacrifices.”³⁵

Thus, even as thousands of memorials sprung up across the country, the debate over design resulted in a lack of consensus among Americans regarding the “right” or “appropriate” method of commemorating those who had served and died in the First World War. One should not view this debate in purely black and white terms, however, as evidenced by the memorials under analysis in this study. Take, for example, the two that would be considered most representative of each side: the Liberty Memorial as traditionalist and Memorial Stadium as modern. As one will see, such narrow delineations immediately become problematic when examining the complete stylistic picture. Though the primary component (and focus in this study) of the Liberty Memorial is its central tower, the memorial complex also includes two exterior buildings, Memorial Hall and Exhibit Hall, that exist as functional structures. And while Memorial Stadium is an excellent example of a living memorial, its proponents firmly believed that functionality should not get in the way of architectural beauty.

The notion of aesthetics as a central aspect of memorials, whether traditional or modern, is a critical element of this dissertation, as the design and placement of all three memorials were

³⁵ Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way*, 109–11; “Joint Resolution Requesting the Commission of Fine Arts to Submit to the Congress Certain Suggestions,” “War Memorials,” *Bulletin of the Municipal Art Society of New York City*, Record Group 66, Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, box 207, World War I Memorials (General), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

influenced to varying degrees by preexisting cultural and architectural factors. In Kansas City and Washington, D.C., the reform philosophy known as the City Beautiful Movement played a direct role in influencing the location and, in the case of the D.C. War Memorial, the architectural style, of each city's memorial. Originating in the work of the nineteenth century landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, the City Beautiful Movement was a progressive reform movement that flourished from the last decade of the nineteenth century through the first several decades of the twentieth century. Its advocates sought to alter America's urban landscape through architectural beautification and urban planning, believing that such a transformation would benefit a society suffering from the detriments of urbanization and industrialization.³⁶ The connection between the two memorials and their cities' efforts to beautify the physical landscape explains the extent to which those chapters address the subject.

Although the City Beautiful Movement did not affect Manhattan, Kansas or Kansas State University, the architectural style of existing buildings on campus, particularly Nichols Gymnasium, did have a direct bearing on the aesthetic appearance of Memorial Stadium. In a departure from the Liberty Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial, the stadium was also overtly influenced by social and cultural constructs, specifically contemporary notions of masculinity and manhood. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, the design of Memorial Stadium was strongly connected to traditional beliefs of beauty but also to masculine traits such as strength and power, all within its role as a living memorial.

³⁶ For more on the origins of the City Beautiful Movement, see William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 1–34. Wilson's works will be cited throughout chapters 1 and 2.

The same complexities and divisions that marked the discussion over physical memorials also existed within the second form of remembrance analyzed in this study. Though lacking the “star” soldier poets of Great Britain, such as Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon, the United States nonetheless witnessed an outpouring of literature, with hundreds of volumes of poetry and countless works of fiction published. Unfortunately, current public knowledge on the subject largely stems from high school English curricula that primarily emphasize postwar disillusionment writers such as Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. This one-sided view of World War I American literature is also reinforced by some scholars, who not only speak negatively of the disillusionment genre but also cast it in one-dimensional terms.

The reality, however, is far more complex, as evidenced by the seven poets examined in Chapter 4. Using language ranging from the overly patriotic and romanticized to what I call the proto-disillusioned, they illustrate the diversity that marked American literature of this period. Rather than an immediate transition from the romantic medievalism of Alan Seeger, arguably the American most like England’s famous soldier poets mentioned above, to the postwar disillusionment of Hemingway, one sees instead a gradual transformation, with traditional language persisting longer than expected, given the realities of war on the Western Front. Contrasting the high literary style of the more familiar Seeger with the six lesser-known writers, while also exploring the differences within the latter group, illuminates the changing and varied nature of American war literature.

The examination of poetry also provides a nuanced understanding of American commemorative efforts. While there are examples of overlap regarding audience or message between the architectural memorials and soldier poetry (analyzed as part of Chapter 4) the poetry

suggests the diversity of soldiers' experiences in the war, whereas the war memorials are reflective of the American public's "sanitized" or "acceptable" version of the war and war experience. Since it was written by the soldiers themselves, the poetry also resonated more with their comrades than the memorials did, which, even in the case of a living memorial such as Memorial Stadium or the D.C. War Memorial, speaks to the heroism and sacrifices of those who died in the Great War. Taken together then, the competing memories generated by war memorials and soldier poetry create a divergent, even problematic, commemorative legacy of World War I in American society.

Despite the national attention bestowed on the Liberty Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial in recent years, there is comparatively little written on either, particularly regarding their aesthetic connection to the surrounding urban landscape. And although Memorial Stadium has made news within the Kansas State University community over the decades, its history has never been linked to period conceptions of manhood and masculinity, nor has it been placed within the broader context of World War I commemorative efforts. The soldier poetry is an even greater historical treasure-trove, as apart from Alan Seeger, none of the poets have been the subject of public attention, let alone formal analysis. Thus, despite drawing upon the arguments of Trout's *On the Battlefield of Memory*, this study gives readers an opportunity for a fresh and fuller understanding of the active and complex nature of America's commemorative response to the First World War.

Chapter 1 - “Lest Kansas City Forget Its War Heroes:” The Liberty Memorial and Early Postwar Memory Construction

Any visitor to Kansas City is immediately struck by the numerous and diverse points of interest: Country Club Plaza, Westport, Power and Light District, Crown Center, 18th and Vine District, to name a few. Tourists are informed that they “must” experience Kansas City barbeque, visit one of the city’s many craft breweries, and take in a Chiefs or Royals game. In the last decade, another “must-see” has been added to the already lengthy list: the National World War I Museum and Memorial. Opened in 2006 and situated on a hill in Penn Valley Park directly across from Union Station, the institution is “dedicated to remembering, interpreting, and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community.”

It is not the museum, however, that catches the arriving visitor’s eye but rather the 217-foot limestone shaft that dominates the surrounding landscape. This tower, along with two exterior buildings and the Great Frieze, make up the Liberty Memorial. Initiated days prior to the cease-fire of November 11, 1918 and officially dedicated on Armistice Day 1926, the memorial stands as a testament to the 441 Kansas Citizens who died in the First World War while also honoring “those who served in the World War.” From its inception, the memorial existed solely as a means of remembrance, continuing the traditional, or utilitarian, commemorative practices of the nineteenth century. In their creation of one of the country’s largest memorials to the First World War, Kansas Citizens were motivated by their desire to erect a permanent reminder of their soldiers’ sacrifices as well as their desire to promote the city itself. This distinctive combination of civic pride and somber reflection, modernity and traditionalism, serves to illustrate the complex nature of American memorialization.

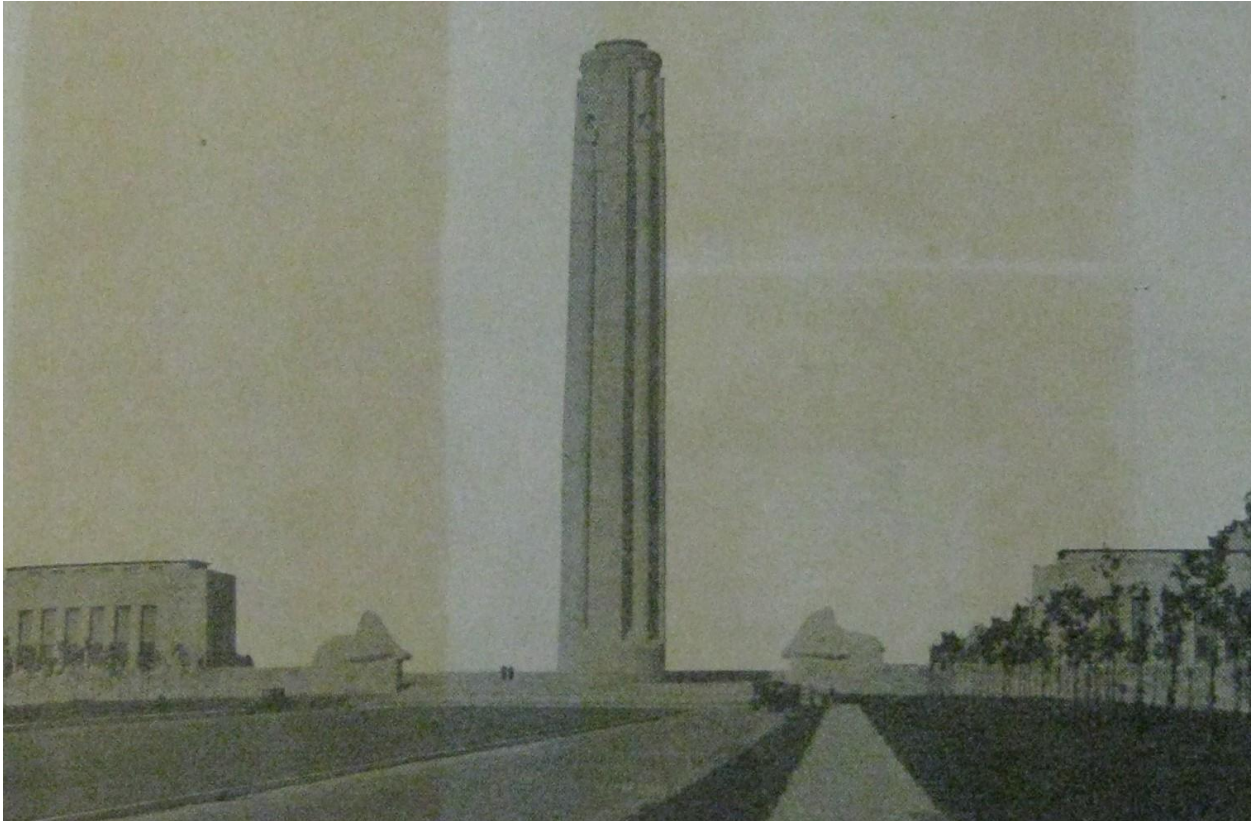


Figure 1.1. A 1926 photograph of the Liberty Memorial, as viewed from the south. Courtesy of the National World War I Museum and Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

“From Mudville to Metropolis”

The city that gave birth to the Liberty Memorial had, by the second decade of the twentieth century, transformed dramatically from its rustic origins. Established in 1821 by French aristocrat Francois Gesseau Chouteau, whose grandfather helped found St. Louis and whose father hosted Merriweather Lewis and William Clark, Kawsmouth, as its earliest settlers called it, served as one piece of an extensive western commercial network centered on St. Louis.³⁷ It was not until 1838, however, that the settlement took on greater significance. That

³⁷ Rick Montgomery and Shirl Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star Books, 1999), 5–7.

year, John Calvin McCoy, a college-educated surveyor and founder of nearby Westport five years earlier, and thirteen others known later as the “historic 14,” formed the Town of Kansas Co. as a steamboat landing at the gateway to Westport.³⁸ Although only “precipitous hills, deep, impassable gorges and dense forest” when McCoy first arrived, by the late 1840s the landing and the town four miles south had overtaken Independence (Missouri) as the principal outfitting point for the Santa Fe trade.³⁹ Flourishing as a result of increased westward expansion, the Town of Kansas Co. nonetheless struggled throughout the 1840s and early 1850s even as it became a municipality in 1850 and adopted a new charter as the City of Kansas in 1853.

National events, however, soon impacted this frontier outpost. With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, thousands of anti-slavery Northerners and pro-slavery Southerners passed through the city on their way to Kansas Territory. The resulting “Bleeding Kansas” inflicted chaos and destruction on the region, as Missouri “border ruffians” and Kansas “jayhawkers” terrorized the countryside, with residents of Westport and the City of Kansas caught directly in the crossfire. This violence only intensified following the onset of secession in 1860 and the formation of the Confederate States of America in early 1861. While outsiders may have considered the City of Kansas a southern stronghold due to the presence of Confederate flags on homes and stores throughout the city, many Northerners had immigrated there in its early years, immigrants who helped elect pro-Union newspaperman Robert Van Horn mayor in April 1861, the very month Confederate forces opened fire on the Union garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Determined to keep the City of Kansas in northern hands, Van Horn

³⁸ Montgomery and Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story*, 22.

³⁹ Montgomery and Kasper, 26–28.

brought Union militiamen from nearby Fort Leavenworth in June 1861 and for the rest of the war, the City of Kansas was an occupied town.⁴⁰

When the Civil War ended in 1865, Kansas City's future prospects appeared quite bleak; its few thousand residents remained divided between Union loyalists and ardent Southerners, and pre-war investments verged on the brink of collapse, threatening to send the town into obscurity. Yet city boosters persisted in their optimism. What later advocates of the Liberty Memorial would call the "Kansas City Spirit" originated in the desperate times of the 1860s, when boosters spoke of their city as "the great city of the western World," over which "the star of Empire paused in its Western course!"⁴¹ Touted as "partly demented" by outsiders, Kansas City's leading men persevered nonetheless, turning rhetoric into reality through successful construction of the first permanent railroad span across the seemingly unbridgeable Missouri River. Opened in 1869, "The Bridge" turned the obscure town into a city; Kansas City's population grew from approximately 4,000 in 1865 to 32,000 by 1870, and the city's origins as a steamboat landing gave way to a continuous stream of locomotives.⁴² Railroads, however, account for only half of Kansas City's boom in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. While "The Bridge," known officially as the Hannibal Bridge (for the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad) by the 1880s, certainly acted as a catalyst for development, it was Texas cattle that gave Kansas City the attention and wealth its leaders craved. In 1871 railroaders converted thirteen acres of property known as the West Bottoms into the region's first unified stockyards operation, giving the city and all of cattle country access to Chicago livestock markets.⁴³ Seven years later, the city's

⁴⁰ Montgomery and Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story*, 51.

⁴¹ Montgomery and Kasper, 68.

⁴² Montgomery and Kasper, 80.

⁴³ Montgomery and Kasper, 105.

successful combination of livestock and locomotives came together in the opening of Union Depot, the largest rail depot west of New York and ideally situated to access the stockyards and meatpackers of the West Bottoms, enabling efficient shipment of their products eastward. Kansas City had become a significant hub in the nation's flow of commerce.⁴⁴

The completion of Union Depot in 1878 launched a decade-long building boom that served to catapult Kansas City into a first-class metropolis. Notable projects included the Kansas City Board of Trade Building, the New York Life Building, and the New England Building, all located on or adjacent to Ninth Street, the city's growing commercial center. Built by nationally-renowned architectural firms, they heightened the interest of architects, law firms, banks, real estate firms, and insurance companies from Chicago and the East to invest in the area.⁴⁵ Kansas City also boasted the third largest cable-car system in the country, directly contributing to a growing rate of urban sprawl while also having a profound effect on Kansas City's neighborhoods and development. Affluent residents, no longer forced to live within walking distance of downtown and seeking to remove themselves from the smog and squalor created by the city's rapid industrial growth, relocated from Quality Hill to areas further south. Kansas City's poorer residents, however, were forced to remain in the numerous slums and shantytowns clustered on the edges of the business district. Concerned that this system of development, if left unchecked, would tarnish the emerging metropolis's reputation, William Rockhill Nelson, boisterous editor of the *Kansas City Star* and staunch advocate for various public works projects, pushed for the implementation of a city-wide park system. The result would be yet another

⁴⁴ Jason Roe, "Bottoms Up," Missouri Valley Special Collections at the Kansas City Public Library, <http://www.kclibrary.org/blog/week-kansas-city-history/bottoms>.

⁴⁵ Wall text, "Kansas City at the Close of the 19th Century," Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO.

transformation for the former Cowtown, one that would directly influence the location of the Liberty Memorial decades later.

Making Kansas City Beautiful

In May 1917, renowned landscape engineer George E. Kessler presented a paper titled “The Kansas City Park System and Its Effect on the City Plan” at the Ninth National Conference on City Planning. Speaking in the city he first arrived in nearly a quarter-century earlier, Kessler recalled that “Kansas City, until its park system was recommended, built itself, like practically all other cities of the country, with little reference to the future.”⁴⁶ American urbanization of the 1870s and 1880s vividly attests to the truth of Kessler’s words as well as justifying William Rockhill Nelson’s fears. Although the earliest attempts to provide Kansas City with a public park date to 1872, they did not gain momentum until the publication of an editorial in the *Kansas City Star* on May 19, 1881. Historian William H. Wilson argues that this partially explains why Nelson has traditionally received credit for initiating the City Beautiful movement in Kansas City. Nelson’s genius, however, lay not in beginning the park and boulevard movement but in ably adding impetus to a movement already underway. As a prominent newspaper editor and real estate man, Nelson exerted tremendous influence on Kansas City’s development, using the *Star* as a mouthpiece for advocating an urban park system.⁴⁷ His method was simple, yet effective. Through repetition, Nelson and his staffers emphasized that “other cities have them” and “Kansas City needs them.” The “other city” most discussed was Chicago, an urban competitor of Kansas City, and one with an established history of beautification. While not overtly stated, the

⁴⁶ George E. Kessler, “The Kansas City Park System and Its Effect on the City Plan,” *Good Roads: A Weekly Journal of Road and Street Engineering and Contracting*, New Series, Volume XIII, No. 22 (June 2, 1917): 321.

⁴⁷ William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1964), 11–13.

Star implied that Kansas City must beautify immediately or see itself lose out to those metropolises that did.⁴⁸

The man who ultimately brought beauty to Kansas City was born in Frankenhäusen, Germany, in 1862. Coming to the United States as a child, George Kessler returned to his native country for formal training in horticulture, civil engineering, and city planning.⁴⁹ Arriving back in the United States in 1881, Kessler contacted renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, and upon Olmstead's recommendation applied for and received a position with the Kansas City, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad. Kessler's successful design of Merriam Park, located ten miles outside of Kansas City in Johnson County, led to his first significant commission, the landscaping of a rugged hollow in a new high-priced residential section of Kansas City named Hyde Park.⁵⁰ It was this project, located only a mile from Nelson's stately mansion Oak Hill, that brought Kessler and Nelson together. Through a mutual acquaintance, Kessler arranged a meeting with the editor, recognizing that the two men had similar views regarding civic improvement, albeit approaching the subject from different perspectives. Aware of Kessler's success at Merriam Park and Hyde Park, Nelson asked the engineer to survey and submit plans for the improvement of the West Bluff (an area that overlooked the West Bottoms). As Kessler later recalled, "These drawings were the first work done on the park system of Kansas City."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City*, 23.

⁴⁹ Bradley C. Weisenburger, "A Historical Analysis of the Role of the Boulevard during the City Beautiful Movement in the United States with a Case Study of the Paseo Boulevard in Kansas City" (master's thesis, Kansas State University. 1990), 17.

⁵⁰ Kessler Society of Kansas City, "George E. Kessler," http://www.georgekessler.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=56.

⁵¹ Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City*, 44.

Kessler's meeting with Nelson occurred at a time when Kansas City's government was undergoing extensive change to manage the increasingly complex problems of a growing metropolis. While a detailed account of this legal and political battle is not possible here, its relevance is that a new city charter passed in 1889, with voters sanctioning a board of parks commissioners for the first time, a testament perhaps to local efforts to obtain an effective park system, and the parks' growing importance in the civic scheme.⁵² Not until 1892 however, did Kansas City's parks board achieve success; under the leadership of its dynamic president, August Robert Meyer, wealthy businessman and neighbor of William Rockhill Nelson, the board hired Kessler as "secretary" and "Engineer to the Board to serve in said capacity without pay."⁵³ One year later, Meyer and Kessler's *Report of the Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners* was published; though "only charged with the development of a park system, not with the development of a general city plan," the 1893 report echoed the commissioners' convictions that "we must deal with it [the park system] in its application to the entire city... We have therefore thought it best to prepare a plan embodying all improvements which, in our opinion, should be undertaken in the near future... it is far better to plan comprehensively and broadly and proceed with actual construction leisurely, than to attempt economy in the original plans..."⁵⁴

Although the board, and the parks movement more broadly, faced opposition, by 1900 Kessler's plan had triumphed. Under the board's direction, Kansas City's parks and boulevard

⁵² Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City*, 27–28.

⁵³ William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 108.

⁵⁴ George E. Kessler, "The Kansas City Park System and Its Effect on the City Plan," 322; *Report of the Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners of Kansas City, MO: Embracing Recommendations for the Establishment of a Park and Boulevard System for Kansas City* (Kansas City, MO: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Co., 1893), 3–4.

system continued to expand through the first two decades of the twentieth century, culminating in the opening of Union Station in 1914. Writing in 1916, George B. Ford stated that “Kansas City, Missouri, has developed the most extensive park system in the country for a city of its size... Today there are 1,985 acres in parks and 590 acres in parkways... a showing equaled by hardly any city in the country except Washington, D.C.”⁵⁵ William Wilson perhaps best encapsulates the significance of the City Beautiful Movement on Kansas City:

The City Beautiful Movement was fundamentally important to Kansas City. It remade an ugly boomtown, giving it miles of graceful boulevards and parkways flanked by desirable residential sections, acres of ruggedly beautiful parkland dotted with recreational improvements, and several neighborhood playgrounds in crowded districts. Its results received attention and praise from city planners across the United States... It reached into every part of the city, establishing unity through its own pervasiveness.⁵⁶

As George Ford’s statement above indicates, Kansas City’s parks and boulevards system was, and remains, one of the best examples of urban beautification in the United States. Before leaving the City Beautiful movement behind, however, an examination of two components within the system are necessary, given their direct connection to the Liberty Memorial. The first is Penn Valley Park, currently occupying nearly two hundred acres west of Crown Center. Once known originally as Penn Street Ravine, the area was a heavily-forested route for pioneers heading west on the Santa Fe Trail. By the 1890s, many of the trees had been cut down to construct houses and buildings, but the area’s historic value and charm contributed to its inclusion in Kessler’s original 1893 report.⁵⁷ Undeterred by the presence of what they and some

⁵⁵ George B. Ford, “The Park System of Kansas City, MO,” *The Architectural Record*, Vol. XL, No. VI (December 1916): 499–501.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City*, xvii.

⁵⁷ “Penn Valley Park,” City of Kansas City Missouri Parks and Recreation Department, <http://kcparks.org/park/penn-valley-park/>.

local citizens saw as “dilapidated houses and rubble,” the Board of Park and Boulevard Commissioners pushed forward and sanctioned the razing of hundreds of structures beginning in 1904 at a cost of \$871,000.⁵⁸ Park roads and facilities were added in the years that followed, and the park expanded from under one hundred acres to its present size.

For the purposes of this study, however, the most important land acquisition occurred in 1920, when the Liberty Memorial Association (LMA), under the recommendation of location committee chairman and real estate mogul J.C. Nichols, declared “the most available location in all of Kansas City for the memorial is the 8 ½ [sic]-acre station park and the ground lying between that and Penn Valley Park.”⁵⁹ Thomas R. Kimball, former president of the American Institute of Architects and professional advisor to the LMA, echoed Nichols’ statement, arguing that “The idea and the site for Kansas City’s liberty memorial offer the greatest architectural opportunity in the history of this country.” Kimball further “believed that if an architect can be found who grasps the idea...Kansas City will have a structure of which this and succeeding generations will be intensely proud.”⁶⁰ Despite serious opposition from seventeen owners of tracts in the location, the city council (backed by a ruling of the Supreme Court of Missouri) authorized the condemnation of thirty-three acres between Union Station Park and Penn Valley Park, with the final cost totaling \$250,000.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Janice Lee, et al, eds., *A Legacy of Design: An Historical Survey of the Kansas City, Missouri Parks and Boulevards System, 1893–1940* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Center for Design Education and Research, 1995), 77–80.

⁵⁹ Derek Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget: Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star Books, 2001), 28.

⁶⁰ “The Union Station Hill Can Be Made into Art Center of United States, Thomas R. Kimball Believes,” *Kansas City Times*, July 9, 1920, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO (hereafter cited as MVSC).

⁶¹ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 28.

The selection of Penn Valley Park as the site for the Liberty Memorial only makes sense when one also considers the opening of Kansas City's Union Station in 1914. The largest monument to the City Beautiful movement in Kansas City, Union Station was a product of the railroads, the key to the city's development and commercial dominance. As stated above, Kansas City built Union Depot in 1878 as a means of confronting the city's increasing passenger traffic. Within a decade, however, the depot proved inadequate for the city's population explosion and mounting passenger and freight traffic. In 1897, the Union Depot Company directors admitted that "...the present Union station is crowded and that the facilities are not in every way all that the railroads...and the traveling public would like." Following a major flood in 1903 (which witnessed six-foot waters surge into the building), constructing a new station beyond the lowlands of the West Bottoms was deemed a necessity. Under the direction of the Kansas City Terminal Railway Company, a new site south of the retail district was selected and ultimately approved by both the city council and Kansas Citians in 1909.⁶²

Union Station came to represent the climax of the City Beautiful movement in Kansas City, intricately woven into the park and boulevard system. Designed by renowned Chicago architect, and product of the City Beautiful tradition, Jarvis Hunt, the monumental and magnificent structure was opened amid grand celebration on October 30, 1914. Hunt and city government officials also proposed a grand civic center, one that would provide Kansas City with a cultural center deemed necessary "because it would be a distinguished badge of municipal progress and proof of civic pride."⁶³ Supporters of the project also believed that a civic center would serve to improve the largely vacant hill south of Union Station. Though cost and

⁶² Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 193–99.

⁶³ Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement*, 202.

organized opposition stalled the civic center idea in 1914, the importance of beautifying the surrounding area remained, especially as Kansas City sought to project a positive image to arriving visitors.⁶⁴ Six years later, the Liberty Memorial Association devised a solution, acquiring additional land in Penn Valley Park (as discussed previously) directly across from Union Station to serve as the location of the Liberty Memorial. Thus, visitors would step out on the Union Station plaza and be confronted with a view of the memorial, a testament not only to Kansas City's participation in the First World War but also to the greatness of the city itself. Taken together, the creation of Penn Valley Park and Union Station, and Kansas City's park and boulevard system as a whole, play a direct role in not only the physical location of the Liberty Memorial but in helping foster a specific image of Kansas City, one that linked commemoration to civic pride.

Kansas City and the Great War

The celebratory atmosphere surrounding the opening of Union Station contrasted sharply with events across the Atlantic. Four months earlier, Austrian archduke and heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo, leading ultimately to the onset of the First World War.⁶⁵ While newspapers such as the *Kansas City Times* and *Kansas City Star* published headlines and editorials regarding the war's outbreak, residents remained focused on what mattered at home. This is evident in a *Star* article dated August 1, 1914, which stated that "Of more direct concern to Kansas City than all of yesterday's war news is the announcement of abundant rain throughout the corn belt of Kansas and Missouri."⁶⁶ Such detachment continued

⁶⁴ Montgomery and Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story*, 178.

⁶⁵ For more information on the July Crisis, see Sean McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

⁶⁶ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 4.

for the next two years, as Kansas Citians watched European events from afar rather than actively following their outcomes.

The complacent and ambivalent attitude expressed by Kansas Citians, and many other Americans, changed in early 1917, when Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare and the public acknowledgment of the validity of the infamous Zimmerman telegram brought the United States into the First World War. In the wake of President Wilson's call to "make the world safe for democracy" and Congress's declaration of war on April 6, 1917, the *Kansas City Star* wrote of a "Loyalty Meeting" at which participants "...were just looking for a fight...Nothing would have suited them better than for someone to have gotten up and said something unpleasant about the United States, the American flag, or the President."⁶⁷ Tented cities sprang up within the metropolis, with the old Home Guard practicing maneuvers in Swope Park and Kansas City women volunteering their services to the American Red Cross. Due to its location and easy accessibility, thanks to the newly-constructed Union Station, Kansas City was chosen as a central place for American troops to gather before being shipped across the ocean to France. Although done under serious circumstances, local civic leaders looked on with immense pride as their modern city flourished in its new wartime role.⁶⁸

With the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, the Great War, having claimed approximately nine million lives worldwide, at last ended. Kansas Citians received word of the event amid the influenza epidemic sweeping the country, a disease that would ultimately claim more than 1,800 of the city's residents. Despite this melancholy, between 60,000 and 100,000

⁶⁷ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 4-5.

⁶⁸ Montgomery and Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story*, 180.

people turned out for a triumphant Victory Parade through the streets of downtown.⁶⁹ While eagerly anticipating the return of their soldiers from Europe, Kansas Citians were fully cognizant of those who would never come home. Though casualties for the United States paled in comparison to those across the Atlantic, the Graves Registration Service in May 1919 recorded 80,178 American dead (this number would change to 116,516 after a fuller accounting) in less than a year of combat.⁷⁰ The death toll for Kansas City stood at 441, including Red Cross nurse Loretta Hollenback. In early December, an editorial appeared in the *Star* entitled “For the Missouri Soldiers;” the Missouri state legislature called for “the erection of a monument honoring the 35,000 Missourians who had served the nation” in the world war.⁷¹ Kansas Citians may have reacted with great pride, and perhaps amusement, to such information, as their own project of memorialization was already underway.

A Public Call for Memorialization

While recent scholarship illustrates Americans’ consistent desire to remember their dead (see the discussion in the Introduction above), one cannot help expressing amazement at the alacrity with which Kansas City initiated the Liberty Memorial project. Two days *prior* to the signing of the Armistice, an editorial appeared in the *Kansas City Journal*, calling for a memorial to

Honor the regiments of youthful crusaders who gloriously asserted their manhood at Soissons and St. Mihiel and Sedan...Price does not matter. But it must be beautiful and imposing enough not to allow the intrinsic beauty to fall below the cause for which it is meant and to fit so beautiful a city.⁷²

⁶⁹ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 6.

⁷⁰ Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 19.

⁷¹ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 6.

⁷² *Kansas City Journal*, November 9, 1918, MVSC.

The modern reader is left speculating as to the memorial's exact origin. The only direct evidence comes from an article in the *Journal* six years later, as Kansas City was preparing to lay the structure's cornerstone. In a full-page cover piece, the newspaper reprinted the original 1918 article, vaguely stating that "The Liberty Memorial idea was conceived by the *Kansas City Journal* and submitted to the people of Kansas City November 9, 1918."⁷³ While this may have been a way for the *Journal* to outshine its primary competitor, Nelson's *Star* (though Nelson himself had died in 1915), it could also be reflective of the more grassroots "Kansas City Spirit" discussed in the beginning of this chapter. This intangible idea, combined with the city's strong sense of civic pride as seen during the city's meteoric rise and dedication to the City Beautiful movement and its emerging desire to remember the dead, suggest that Kansas City residents collectively pushed the idea of a war memorial. Thus, what initially appears a spontaneous reaction is actually a publicized reflection of Kansas Citians' internal sentiments.

Less than one month after the editorial, the Joint Councilmanic Committee of the City Council met with Kansas City mayor James Cowgill to arrange "for an appropriate memorial expressing the appreciation of the people...of the service and sacrifice of the soldiers, sailors and citizens during the European War..." They informed lumber baron and civic leader Robert Alexander Long of his nomination as temporary chairman of a general mass meeting on the subject, at which he was chosen as the permanent chairman of the newly-formed Memorial Committee. Just two weeks later, on December 12, 1918, the Memorial Committee held its first meeting and the name "Liberty Memorial Association" decided upon, as the word "liberty" had

⁷³ *Kansas City Journal-Post*, November 9, 1924, Liberty Memorial Association (LMA) Press Clippings, volume IV, compiled by J.E. McPherson, secretary of the LMA, National World War I Museum and Memorial Archives (hereafter cited as LMA Press Clippings, volume number).

been used extensively in connection with the war.⁷⁴ One of Long's first actions as chairman, which was supported by the LMA, was to open the process of selecting the memorial's name to the public and not confining the choice to committee members. In an article dated December 13, 1918, the *Kansas City Times* asked Kansas Citians to "step forward with names for the memorial movement;" only one week later, the *Times* proudly reported the selection of "Liberty Memorial."

It is difficult to say whether civic leaders had a name such as this in mind and indirectly stressed its acceptance, or if Kansas Citians independently agreed with their sentiments. Interestingly, however, no differentiation is made by committee members or city newspapers regarding the name of the organization and the memorial, suggesting that perhaps having decided on "Liberty Memorial Association," the committee, along with the public, accepted this as the memorial's official name. It is also worth noting that even as "Liberty Memorial" was decided upon, subsequent news articles refer to it as the "Victory Memorial," perhaps a testament to the synonymous meaning attached to "liberty and "victory" in the months following the armistice, as seen in the construction of temporary victory arches across the country in celebration of the war's conclusion and the return of troops.⁷⁵ What is clear, however, is how strongly, only months into the project, the memorial resonated in the hearts and minds of Kansas Citians.

As 1919 dawned, both the LMA and the people of Kansas City were anxious to move forward with the memorial process. As with their call for residents' opinions on the memorial's name, the LMA sought public assistance in deciding on the physical nature of the memorial, thus

⁷⁴ Sarajane Sandusky Aber, "An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri 1918–1935" (master's thesis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1988), 2 (hereafter cited as "An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial").

⁷⁵ "Want Memorial Names," *Kansas City Times*, December 13, 1918, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

establishing a precedent maintained throughout the memorial's evolution. They called for "those who have in their minds ideas as to what form the memorial should take...to put their suggestions in writing and mail them...care of the Commerce Building."⁷⁶ Over the next several months, Kansas Citians sent their ideas to the LMA, and while not all accounts were published, local newspapers devoted many articles and columns to this purpose. With minor exceptions (discussed further below), it is evident that residents strongly favored a traditional memorial centered on artistic beauty; as stated in the Introduction, this could, and in some cases did, include buildings. In an address before the LMA in late January, Dr. Harry C. Rogers called for

A magnificent building, the entrance to which may be in the form of a noble arch of triumph; the halls of which may be the repository of trophies and relics of battle; the walls of which may be honored with the names of our sons of war...and the auditorium of which might serve as a meeting place of all those who would gather to hear the stories of the heroic past....

Mrs. George H. Hoxie echoed Rogers' comments (and Alan Seeger's ideas about arts' idealizing vocation) in a paper sent to the LMA, contending that an ordinary shaft or tower would not do, proposing instead "a building, with artistic grounds and approaches is the only setting for a real memorial. In the building there should be told in sculpture of the highest type the story of the causes of the war and of our entrance into it."⁷⁷ The following month, the report of the subcommittee on public opinion was read at a public meeting. It spoke of the "hastily planned and ill adapted to commemorate" Civil War memorials and stated that, "The general demand seems to be for a memorial that will have at least for its base a great building...[that] will best express the spirit of service that characterized our soldiers."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ "Progress on Memorial," *Kansas City Times*, January 13, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

⁷⁷ "More on Memorial Ideas," *Kansas City Times*, January 24, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

⁷⁸ "Consider Memorial Ideas," *Kansas City Times*, February 21, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

But some perceived the inclusion of a building as moving beyond the “real” purpose of a memorial. Chicago sculptor Nellie V. Walker, speaking in Kansas City at the end of January, argued that “it is self-evident that a memorial should do no other service except as a memorial. The sole function of a memorial is to memorialize. There is danger that a building will not do this.”⁷⁹ In a possible reflection of the “anti-economic” view of the war, Judge John Phillips, a Civil War veteran, stated: “This memorial ought to be a work of art...entirely separated from commercialism.”⁸⁰ And at one of the last public meetings, John T. Harding urged a purely artistic memorial: “A useful memorial is not a human way of expressing honor to the memory of the dead...Heaven’s mercy on a nation which cannot leave it utilities long enough to honor its dead.”⁸¹ The final unanimous decision, made by the LMA but influenced by an informal public ballot, was a compromise:

A Monument plus a building, not for utilitarian purposes, but to house trophies of war with other matters closely related thereto. The particular design of monument and building is to be worked out by the committee of twenty-five with the architect, and the design selected to be reported back to the committee of two hundred and fifty before final adoption.⁸²

Notably absent in the early debate over form and style is the voices of former soldiers. In all the Kansas City newspaper articles and editorials on the memorial in the months following the Armistice, only one cites a veteran, though a prominent one. Major General Peter E. Traub,

⁷⁹ “Chicagoan Lauds K.C. Plans for a Victory Monument,” *Kansas City Journal*, January 31, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

⁸⁰ “Organization Is Completed for Soldier Tribute,” *Kansas City Journal*, January 10, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

⁸¹ “Urges Monument as Most Fitting Soldier Tribute,” *Kansas City Journal*, March 25, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

⁸² “For A Monument and Hall,” *Kansas City Times*, April 4, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

commander of the 35th Infantry Division (Kansas and Missouri National Guard) from June to December 1918, asserts that “The type of memorial that the soldiers want is a monument”; indeed, the sub-heading of the article proclaims, “[Traub] Declares Soldiers Themselves Favor Purely Artistic Form.”⁸³ Traub continues, “It is because I have seen the splendid monuments [at West Point] and because I know the sentiment of a great part of our fighting men that I have taken the liberty of speaking to many of your men in the memorial committee and of urging a monument.”⁸⁴ It is difficult to say for certain whether Traub truly spoke on behalf of and understood the sentiments of former soldiers, as we do not hear their voices, either for or against the project. Given Traub’s controversial actions as leader of the 35th Division during the Meuse-Argonne offensive, however, it seems likely that former soldiers may have read Traub’s words less positively than he (and even the LMA) expected.⁸⁵

While the reason for the insertion of Traub’s voice and its effects on the men of his former command may never be known, a more concrete explanation for the absence of veteran voices does exist. Jay Winter has argued that war memorials’ very existence is directly linked to remembrance of the dead, rather than the living.⁸⁶ I believe, then, that Kansas Citizens did not seek or publish veterans’ opinions because, while they respected and valued former soldiers’ service, the memorial was meant to commemorate those who died first, only secondarily acting

⁸³ “Traub Endorses Monument Plan for Memorial,” *Kansas City Journal*, April 3, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

⁸⁴ “Traub Endorses Monument Plan for Memorial.”

⁸⁵ Traub was severely criticized for making extensive changes in the division command structure right before the battle, a decision which likely contributed to the division’s poor performance and high casualties. For a more complete description of Traub’s military experience, see <http://apps.westpointaog.org/Memorials/Article/3127/>.

⁸⁶ See discussion of Winter in Introduction.

as a reminder of all those who served. The emphasis on the dead is illustrated quite clearly in the fundraising drive of October and November 1919.

“Can You Afford Not to Honor Him?”

In the midst of the discussion over the type of memorial to be constructed in Kansas City, George Kessler, who had moved to St. Louis in 1910 but remained connected to Kansas City and now acted as an informal advisor to the LMA, informed the memorial committee that “a fitting memorial would cost a minimum of \$2 million.”⁸⁷ Rather than cast a pall over the project, this announcement was met with determination on the part of the LMA and Kansas Citians. In October 1919, the *Journal* proclaimed that “K.C. Will Be Asked to Contribute \$2,500,000 for Soldier Tribute and for Support of Charities,” with the fundraising drive to take place from October 27 to November 1.⁸⁸ In the interim, Kansas City’s newspapers waged what can best be described as an effective propaganda campaign, relying on repetitive and formalized language as well as emotional appeals so as to “ready” Kansas Citians for the fundraising drive, a tactic utilized during the drive itself, as will be seen. This demonstrates the city’s commitment to the Liberty Memorial project and helps explain how Kansas City was able to have a memorial of the size of the Liberty Memorial, versus the more common doughboy statue seen in thousands of communities across the country. While it is not possible to explore every article in detail, a simple listing of headlines attests to Kansas City’s dedication:

“Set for Memorial Drive” *Kansas City Star*, October 15, 1919.

“Support of Drive Urged at Crane Lecture by R.A. Long” *Kansas City Times*, October 16, 1919.

“Opportunity for All to Pay Homage” *Kansas City Journal*, October 16, 1919.

⁸⁷ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 20.

⁸⁸ “R.A. Long Will Lead the Drive for Memorial,” *Kansas City Journal*, October 3, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

“Should Be Joy to Contribute to Memorial” *Kansas City Journal*,
October 17, 1919.
“Obligation of Memorial A Sacred One” *Kansas City Journal*,
October 18, 1919.
“Everybody Is Pledging Aid to Memorial” *Kansas City Journal*,
October 22, 1919.⁸⁹

Interspersed throughout these headlines are others focused on segments of Kansas City society: women, children, workers, and African Americans. Kansas City women in particular were called upon “to make possible Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial.” Linking women’s service during the war, both at home helping with Victory Loans and abroad as members of the Red Cross, to the memorial project, newspapers openly stated that “Upon the responses of the women depends the success of the drive for \$2,500,000 for the memorial...members of the campaign committee said Monday morning.”⁹⁰ Children too were seen as vital to the campaign, as “They will work for the campaign in the schools, the Sunday schools and in the [fundraising drive] parade planned for Saturday morning.” Civic leaders stressed that the memorial “. . . will memorialize the men who fought in the great war, but its more immediate purpose will be to perpetuate memories among the growing generations. ‘Lest the ages forget’ is the by-word of the campaign.”⁹¹

Kansas City newspapers also, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, spoke of African Americans’ contributions toward the campaign. These articles may have served as a means of downplaying potential or existing racial tensions in favor of promoting unity, especially as several cities (including neighboring Chicago and St. Louis) experienced violent race riots only

⁸⁹ LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

⁹⁰ “Liberty Memorial Campaign Success Depends on Women,” *Kansas City Post*, October 13, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

⁹¹ “Children to Play Big Part in Campaign,” LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

months before, or they may stand as legitimate expressions of enthusiasm regarding the black communities' participation in the campaign. The *Star* stated that "It will be the first time Negroes have worked independently," but later said that "The negroes will conduct their own campaign." The *Journal* wrote how "The negro population of Kansas City is going to swing right in behind and boost the Liberty Memorial drive," while a *Kansas City Post* headline proclaimed "Negroes to Have Separate Part in Big Memorial Drive" and openly declared that "The race problem in the Liberty Memorial campaign will be nil."⁹² As these articles were compiled by the LMA and only include pieces pertinent to the Liberty Memorial directly, it is not possible (at least within the confines of this work) to know how the city's African Americans reacted or responded to their content.

As illustrated by the articles above, the need and desire to remember as well as the importance of social unity were strongly emphasized in the weeks prior to the start of the fundraising campaign. But LMA members, who were also among Kansas City's civic elite, also highlighted the Liberty Memorial's civic value. Kansas City residents also saw in the memorial an opportunity to solidify their city's place in the nation. J. M. Bernardin, chairman of the campaign's male workers, emphatically stated that the building of the memorial "means the turning point of Kansas City. Once built, the memorial cannot but attract other civic developments, all of which will record our real progress." He further notes that with Kansas City "in the lead with our memorial idea," the city is an inspiration for future projects around the country and so must not disappoint, the very reputation of Kansas City being at stake.⁹³ When

⁹² "Set for Memorial Drive," *Kansas City Star*, October 15, 1919; "Negroes Enthusiastic Over Memorial Plan," *Kansas City Journal*, October 18, 1919; "Negroes to Have Separate Part in Big Memorial Drive," *Kansas City Post*, October 15, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume 1.

⁹³ "Memorial A Civic Asset," *Kansas City Star*, October 3, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

completed (an event still several years away in 1919), the memorial would stand as a physical reminder of the city's participation in the First World War as well as an aesthetically pleasing sight for arriving visitors, hence its ultimate location across from Union Station. This assertion of civic pride should not detract from the memorial's primary purpose (as stated by the *Journal* on November 9, 1918); it is important, however, to recognize that the language used during the memorial campaign, a language that invoked glory, honor, and sacrifice, was arguably one way civic leaders could draw attention away from any possible commercial benefits.⁹⁴

One of the last articles published before the start of the fundraising drive contains a letter from former 89th Division staff officer H. R. Palmer. Having heard for "two days in succession" R.A. Long and J.C. Nichols advocate in favor of the memorial, Palmer calls on Kansas Citians "to follow their business judgment" and "make this 2-million-dollar project the corner stone of a magnificent group where the civic bequests of wealthy Kansas Citians may find suitable expression."⁹⁵ As one of the very few veteran voices, Palmer's inclusion in the newspaper is noteworthy in itself, but the letter also stands out for its call for a civic center based around the Liberty Memorial, an idea first advocated (and still supported in 1919) by George Kessler. This is more than just city pride, however; Palmer's sentiments reflect veterans' desire for inclusion in the commemorative process. Though concrete evidence is lacking, one can argue that in the debate over memorial's architectural and aesthetic form, veterans largely supported utilitarian structures because such structures were more reflective of the living (versus the dead) and thus could better assist their transition back into mainstream American society. Having come home to

⁹⁴ As Steven Trout points out, advocates of living memorials used the same language to detract from any perceived commercialism associated with their project. As stated in the Introduction, the question of traditional vs. modern was hardly a black and white one. Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*, 108.

⁹⁵ "At the Turn of The Road," *Kansas City Star*, October 24, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

an unsettled society and “trying to understand how the war experience had shaped their own lives,” soldiers could perhaps find solace in veterans’ homes or common gathering places such as libraries and auditoriums.⁹⁶ They may have understood Americans’ need for traditional memorials, as they too were grieving, but thought the living deserved care and support beyond mere participation in public commemorative events or parades.

The next day, October 25, 1919, Kansas City officially initiated its fundraising drive for the Liberty Memorial. Contrary to the preceding months, veterans played an active and prominent role in the morning’s parade; one thousand former soldiers marched in uniform, led by the state commander of the American Legion, though the exact gender and racial makeup of these veterans is not clear. Regardless, they were not the subject of the parade. As “A Requiem to the 506 Kansas City Martyrs,” the parade strongly resembled a funeral march, with the general atmosphere reminiscent of nineteenth-century mourning processions. In “reverent silence,” Kansas Citians turned out in the thousands in remembrance of the “Heroes Who Sleep Across the Waters.”⁹⁷ This solemnity continued into the next day, when churches of all denominations led residents in “common inspiration” to “Acknowledge the Debt Due War Heroes.” The *Journal* wrote:

Today, the first day of Liberty Memorial Week, will be celebrated by Memorial services and prayers in every Kansas City church. Kansas City in this way will dedicate itself to the great task of the week, the pledging of a memorial to the 404 men who made the supreme sacrifice for the city and nation in the great war.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 160.

⁹⁷ “Liberty Memorial Parade A Requiem to the 506 Kansas City Martyrs,” *Kansas City Post*, October 25, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I. It is not known why 506 is used here, as the number on the memorial is 441.

⁹⁸ “K.C. Churches to Pray for the Memorial,” *Kansas City Journal*, October 26, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I. Again, it is unknown why the wrong number is cited here.

Parades and prayers would not by themselves raise the necessary two million dollars, however; legions of donation workers, men and women, set out to canvass the city in search of funding. The goal, as desired by Robert Long and the LMA, was to collect all two million within the short span of ten days. Long himself contributed \$80,000 immediately, closely followed by industry giant and LMA member C.W. Armour's donation of \$40,000. The *Post* proudly stated that "In less than three hours Monday [October 27th] morning, Kansas City gave \$342,526 to the great Liberty Memorial fund," an astonishing achievement.⁹⁹ Great lists of major donors were compiled and published in the newspapers in hopes of prompting others to contribute more. Smaller donations were also recognized; popular stories circulated regarding the pennies, nickels and dimes collected by the city's schoolchildren. Nevertheless, the pace established on the twenty-seventh did not hold up; with three days to go, the memorial fund remained over half a million dollars short. On November 2, the *Post* published a full-page ad showing a woman as "The Kansas City Spirit" calling on residents to "Come On!" with an illustration of the memorial (not yet designed) shining in the distance. Finally, on November 6, after a last-minute push by campaign workers and additional gifts from large donors, the *Times* reported victory, and the building of Kansas City's memorial was assured.

In his book *Lest the Ages Forget*, Derek Donovan states that "the Liberty Memorial fundraising campaign achieved its goals, thanks to the generosity of Kansas City and the tireless support by leaders of the Liberty Memorial Association."¹⁰⁰ While certainly true, Kansas Citians were also greatly influenced by the various illustrations and editorials published by local

⁹⁹ "Workers Wild with Enthusiasm as Long Reports First Big Gift," *Kansas City Post*, October 27, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

¹⁰⁰ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 23.

newspapers. Strong emotional language surrounded the memorial idea from its inception, with civic leaders promoting the development of a specific type of war memorial and war memory throughout, both consistently emphasizing the dead over the living. On the same day Kansas City churches were invoking their common prayers, the *Post* published a large fold-out ad titled “We are the dead;” bordered by Roman-inspired columns and wreaths and listed under the subheading “The Sons of Kansas City Who Made the Supreme Sacrifice” are the names of all Kansas Citizens who died in the war. At the bottom, readers are asked to “Pay your tribute to their memory. Enroll yourself among the builders of the Liberty War Memorial.”¹⁰¹ Throughout the campaign, a series of full-page soldier vignettes entitled “Lest the Ages Forget” also appeared in Kansas City newspapers. Depicting a selection of officers, each contained a sketch of the soldier and a description of his death. Major Murray Davis’s vignette stands out, as it links his death to the need for the Liberty Memorial. After stating that Davis posthumously received the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), the writer then concludes with the following:

It is such lives and death as this that will be built imperishably into the structure of the newer and better world that must be reared upon the old. Let us here in his old home town keep forever green the memory of Maj. Murray Davis and his 399 Kansas City comrades who also gave their lives for the great cause. Every one of us can help by subscribing to the Liberty War Memorial.¹⁰²

The inclusion of the campaign’s final illustration, however, is (to say the least) highly questionable. Under the headline “He Gave His All for Your Liberty! Can You Afford Not to Honor Him?” is a Union Pacific Press Bureau photograph of a dead soldier strewn across an

¹⁰¹ “We are the Dead,” *Kansas City Post*, October 26, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume I.

¹⁰² “Lest the Ages Forget,” Newspaper and date unknown, LMA Press Clippings, volume I. The reasoning behind the decision to portray only white men of rank is not known, but likely reflects contemporary understandings of race and race relations.

entanglement of barb wire. Across the bottom is scrawled (rather than typed) “His Price of Peace,” with a typed caption indicating the necessity of constructing the Liberty Memorial so as “to perpetuate the memory of those men who fought and died.”¹⁰³ This physically shocking image moves well beyond acceptable forms of influence into the realm of outright propaganda, raising questions about how the photograph came to be published in the first place. The LMA’s emotional appeal for support via specific word choice and imagery is understandable, as it fits within the larger context of memory creation in the United States after the First World War. This graphic image, however, violated contemporary sets of norms regarding the respectful treatment and depiction of the dead. It is not known how Kansas Citians responded to the photograph; the campaign ended the following day, with the final tally standing at over \$2.5 million. With its core war memory established, Kansas City could now work to make its memorial a physical reality.

“Kansas City Takes the Lead”

Within months of the fundraising campaign’s close, the LMA began its search for a site on which to build the Liberty Memorial. As discussed above, J.C. Nichols proved instrumental in guiding the memorial location committee toward the selection of land south of Union Station, effectively expanding the borders of Penn Valley Park. Having “taken into consideration the Kansas City of today and of the future, and the accessibility to the greatest number of our citizens... We believe that the union station is a fixed location to which the street car transportation, boulevard and traffic approaches will always surpass any other one location in Kansas City.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ “He Gave His All for Your Liberty!” *Kansas City Post*, November 5, 1919, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹⁰⁴ “Site for Memorial,” *Kansas City Star*, January 25, 1920, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

But practical concerns were not the only deciding factor. Harkening back to ideas expressed by George Kessler in 1893, the report also spoke hopefully of the establishment of an art center: “After acquiring this property the city can give to the Liberty Memorial Association the privilege of building not only our memorial building but such buildings as belong to a beautiful art center, which is our hope to establish.”¹⁰⁵ Kessler himself approved the location without qualification, stating that “There are but two spots in Kansas City that will remain permanent...Those are Swope park and the site chosen for the Liberty Memorial.”¹⁰⁶ The famous architect went on to describe what the site could, and should, become: “While recognition of all activities that helped win the war is of primary interest, the completion of the memorial building is sure to be followed by the establishment of an art center...which will make Kansas City the mecca of the Southwest...”¹⁰⁷ LMA officials and city newspapers also stressed the location’s aesthetic importance in helping to promote civic pride. Under the subheading “To Enhance View for Visitors,” the *Post* articulated this:

No greater evidence of our gratitude to the boys for whom this memorial is to be established could be shown the visitor to our city than the wonderfully inspiring view that would greet him as he comes through the Union station door...Kansas City will never outgrow the desirability of this location. We have carefully considered memorials located in other cities of the United States, and find, without exception, that the memorials upon which the highest appreciation is placed, are those that are near to the center of the community.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ “Site for Memorial,” *Kansas City Star*, January 25, 1920, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹⁰⁶ “Liberty Memorial Site Chosen South of Station Plaza,” *Kansas City Post*, January 25, 1920, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹⁰⁷ “Sure to Start Art Center,” newspaper and date unknown, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹⁰⁸ “Liberty Memorial Site Chosen South of Union Station Plaza,” *Kansas City Post*, January 25, 1920, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

Although the memorial project had only just transitioned to reality, the newspapers' efforts to balance the competing interests of memorialization and commercialism cum civic pride is striking. While dedicated to remembering their dead, Kansas Citians are also clearly eager to attract outside attention, a sentiment that becomes increasingly evident during the events of the next several years.

Less than one year after the LMA decided on the Liberty Memorial's location, they set out to find an architect to bring the monument to life. In a statement dated October 14, 1920, the search committee, aided by Thomas R. Kimball, noted architect and former president of the American Institute of Architecture, echoed earlier sentiments that "The object of this competition...is to secure to Kansas City a Memorial worthy to stand for the record made by her sons in the World War, and to provide the keynote to the ultimate development of the whole site."¹⁰⁹ They devised a national competition that would "determine the artist, not the plan, for the memorial" and produced a printed program laying out the format of the contest, the chief aim of which would be to obtain "An inspiring monument worthy of the record of which it is to be the messenger—a symbol not of War, but Peace, and the dawn of an era of Peace."¹¹⁰

Encouraging submissions from Kansas City and across the country, the search committee also personally invited five firms with distinguished national reputations. This suggests that while a national competition, the LMA hoped the winning design would originate from one of these firms, lending further credence and national attention to their memorial project. In fact, that is exactly what happened. On June 24, 1921, "The jury of five noted architects, selected by the Liberty Memorial association to choose an architect...went into session at the Hotel

¹⁰⁹ Aber, "An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial," 18.

¹¹⁰ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 28.

Muehlebach,” with the decision expected within a week’s time.¹¹¹ Five days later, the *Kansas City Times* announced the winner. In a unanimous decision, the jury had selected Harold Van Buren Magonigle of New York, one of the five firms invited to participate, to “design and supervise the construction of Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial.”¹¹²

At the time of his selection to construct the Liberty Memorial, Harold Van Buren Magonigle stood as one of the nation’s leading architects. He began his architectural career in 1881, working with several notable firms before traveling to Europe in 1894. Upon his return to the United States, Magonigle was associated with several New York firms, but beginning in 1904 and for the remainder of his professional career he practiced alone.¹¹³ Before his time in Kansas City, Magonigle’s greatest achievements centered on the design of monuments, something that likely influenced the LMA’s invitation to participate in the competition. One such monument is the McKinley Memorial in Canton, Ohio. Dedicated in honor of the slain president in 1907, Magonigle’s design featured a cross-sword layout, with a mausoleum located at the junction of the blade, guard, and hilt. This is worth mentioning, as Magonigle would utilize a similar design layout for the Liberty Memorial, albeit with some modifications. His design called for a soaring memorial shaft flanked atop a giant wall by two urns and framed below by a reflecting pool (which was never constructed) and two sphinxes representing “Memory” and “The Future.” His plans drew on the then-popular Egyptian Revival style as well as the

¹¹¹ “Art Jury in Session to Choose Liberty Memorial Architect,” *Kansas City Post*, June 24, 1921, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹¹² “Memorial Awards,” *Kansas City Times*, June 29, 1921, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹¹³ “Biographical/Historical Information, Harold Van Buren Magonigle,” New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts, <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/1838>.

geometric patterns of what became Art Deco; the jury described it as an “architectural masterpiece, a design of commanding dignity, power, and beauty.”¹¹⁴

The jury was not alone in being impressed with Magonigle’s design. In the months leading up to the memorial’s site dedication, planned for November 1, 1921, Kansas City was the subject of numerous articles praising not only Magonigle’s design but the memorial project more broadly, and that praise only intensified over the next several years. *The Western Architect* stated in July that “Future development of the Kansas City Memorial plans will be closely followed not alone by architects but by others...,” and the cover of the October 1921 issue of *American Stone Trade* featured a rendering of Magonigle’s design with the headline “Kansas City Takes the Lead: World’s Greatest Memorial to the Principle of Patriotism.”¹¹⁵ In a statement to LMA secretary J.E. McPherson published in the *Kansas City Star*, the journal’s editor compared the Liberty Memorial with the work of Dinocrates, a Greek architect and technical advisor to Alexander the Great: “Not since Dinocrates built the Pharos of Alexandria...has there been a memorial conception in its class...”¹¹⁶ The article’s concluding paragraph boldly pronounces: “There are larger and by reason of that far richer cities to be found than Kansas City, but who dares to say there is a greater, with this vision of patriotism to hail the future with loyal confidence in American institutions, and upon a scale that the world has never known until now?”¹¹⁷ Even the prestigious *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* offered that

¹¹⁴ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 43; “Memorial Awards,” *Kansas City Times*, June 29, 1921, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹¹⁵ “The Competition for a Memorial for Kansas City,” *Western Architect* (July 1921), 71, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹¹⁶ “The Greatest Memorial,” *Kansas City Star*, October 22, 1921, MVSC.

¹¹⁷ “Kansas City Takes the Lead: World’s Greatest Memorial to the Principle of Patriotism,” *American Stone Trade* 21, no. 3 (October 1921), 33, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

“Kansas City comes to the very forefront of architectural interest, as is told elsewhere in this issue....In the Kansas City Memorial, Mr. Magonigle has risen to the heights of genius. He has achieved a masterly handling of a problem with which it might be said that there have been few to compare in modern architecture.”¹¹⁸

As Kansas City readily welcomed this praise and attention, it prepared for the November 1 site dedication, an event that would coincide with the third national convention of the newly-formed American Legion. This was no coincidence. One can argue that as the Liberty Memorial was a means by which Kansas City sought to create a specific memory of American involvement in the Great War, so too was the American Legion a memory-creating organization.¹¹⁹ It is certain that the LMA as well as Kansas Citians recognized the significance of this timing, along with the national and international attention the ceremony would bring. Ultimately, however, it was not the American Legion that helped draw outside attention to Kansas City. Among the tens of thousands of spectators expected, the five Allied commanders of the First World War—General John J. Pershing, Lt. General Baron Jacques of Belgium, General Armando Diaz of Italy, Marshal Ferdinand Foch of France, and Admiral Lord David Beatty of Great Britain—would all be attendance, the first time the men ever gathered in the same place. In addition, Vice-President Calvin Coolidge planned to attend as an “honored guest.”¹²⁰

On the day of the dedication ceremony in 1921, more than 100,000 people gathered on and around the hill opposite Union Station to partake in and bear witness to an event two years in

¹¹⁸ “Shadows and Straws,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 9, no. 8 (August 1921), 259, LMA Press Clippings, volume II.

¹¹⁹ For more information on the American Legion, see Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History, 1919–1989* (New York: M. Evans and Co., 1990).

¹²⁰ Aber, “An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial,” 38.

the making. Complete with a “great altar” and young women dressed as vestal virgins, the dedication was both “an elaborate spectacle” and “a remarkable event of worldwide interest.”¹²¹

The Allied leaders spoke in turn about the important role played by Pershing’s American Expeditionary Force in helping to bring about Germany’s defeat, praising the virtues, heroism and sacrifices of American soldiers. Interestingly, none of the men mentioned the Liberty Memorial directly but rather emphasized their coming to Kansas City in connection with the American Legion. Even the pamphlets printed afterward have on their cover “Speech of [Allied leader’s name] of [their country] at the Third Annual Convention American Legion, Kansas City, MO.”¹²²

Kansas City newspapers, however, articulated the event’s purpose in unambiguous terms. Employing a combination of religious and patriotic language, the *Kansas City Post* wrote that “In sight of hushed throngs, impressive exercises are held at shrine for worship of heroism while strains of national air [i.e., the national anthem, “Onward Christian Soldiers,” etc.] are wafted on November breeze.”¹²³ In similar fashion, the *Star* described how although “Few caught the words from Foch, Jacques, Diaz, Beatty, and Pershing, or the spoken ceremonial that marked today’s dedication, a ringing atmosphere transmitted to far hills the gist of what was transpiring at altar and rostrum on banner and flag-crowned Memorial Hill.”¹²⁴ As the crowds departed

¹²¹ Aber, “An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial,” 38.

¹²² Pamphlets from the collection of the National World War I Museum and Memorial Archives.

¹²³ Frances Davis, “World Heroes in Dedication of Memorial,” *Kansas City Post*, November 1, 1921, LMA Press Clippings.

¹²⁴ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 56.

Kansas City in the days following the ceremony, one visiting Legionnaire told *The Star*, “When Kansas City does anything, you can bet on its being done right.”¹²⁵

Considering the discussion above, the 1921 dedication ceremony marked the beginning of the Liberty Memorial’s “national” status claim. The presence of important national and international figures, the coverage of the memorial in national architectural journals, and above all, the sense among Kansas Citians that their memorial was contributing not only to their city but to the nation; that it would serve as a prime example of World War memorialization. This sentiment only increased as the memorial took shape, becoming permanent at the 1926 dedication.

“Nation’s Eyes Will Turn to Liberty Shaft”

With the 1921 site dedication behind them, Kansas Citians could now focus on the task ahead—to make Magonigle’s breathtaking plans come to life. Like many design competitions (then and now), however, his winning submission required translation from drawing to building plans. It is not possible to discuss this process in depth here, but the LMA’s hopes for a quick start to the project were ultimately delayed until April 1923, when the organization’s board of governors approved Magonigle’s final plans.¹²⁶ Two months later, J. C. Nichols announced that the building contract for the tower and exterior buildings had been awarded to Westlake Construction Company of St. Louis, with work to begin in two weeks.¹²⁷ As it turned out, however, geological discoveries during the preliminary phase of construction forced yet another

¹²⁵ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 58.

¹²⁶ For more information on this, see Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 64–65, and Aber, “An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial,” 40–56. Magonigle’s approved plans are housed at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University Libraries, New York, NY.

¹²⁷ “Works Starts on Memorial in Two Weeks,” *Kansas City Journal-Post*, June 13, 1923.

delay. Instead of a “hill of rock,” the site consisted of “honeycombed and grottoed rock and muddy clay,” the result of ancient glaciers. This set the tone for the remainder of the construction period, which was marked by long delays and steadily rising costs.¹²⁸

Despite construction difficulties, rising costs, and questions over the final design, the planning of the Liberty Memorial’s cornerstone laying went forward in the spring and summer of 1924. Although the ceremony itself was to be a local affair as compared to the international tone of the 1921 dedication, Kansas City newspapers continued to trumpet the worldly significance of the memorial and their city more broadly. In June, the *Kansas City Times* contained a full-page ad with the headline “Come to Kansas City, The Sanctuary of the Flag.” The ad text details Kansas City’s many contributions to the war effort, repeatedly proclaiming its citizens’ overwhelming patriotism and devotion to the flag and constitution. The article also recalls a visit from then-president Warren Harding the previous year, when he exclaimed, “Kansas City should have a new christening. Kansas City should be called...The Sanctuary of the Flag.” One can almost feel the hometown pride emanating from the page as the author highlights the memorial’s inception and subsequent public commitment in the form of the fundraising campaign. In case readers missed the message, the article concluded with the pronouncement that “Kansas City is a good place to live in!”¹²⁹

With some justification, the *Times* was seeking to further the Liberty Memorial and Kansas City’s image as worthy of national, even world, recognition. This assertion is supported

¹²⁸ Aber, “An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial,” 60; Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 66. It was also at this time that questions were raised regarding the surrounding landscape, particularly Signboard Hill. That area’s “ugliness” was not fully addressed until the 1960s, with the building of Crown Center.

¹²⁹ “Come to Kansas City, The Sanctuary of the Flag,” *Kansas City Times*, June 21, 1924, LMA Press Clippings, volume IV (emphasis in original).

by an article that appeared two months later in the *Kansas City Journal* entitled “Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial, Fast Taking Form, Will Make City Known All Over the World.” In words similar to that of the 1921 *American Stone Trade* article, Kansas City is once again compared to ancient landmarks: “As the island of Pharos, off the coast of Egypt, was made famous in antiquity by its great lighthouse upon the top of which burned a continual beacon of warning and inspiration to mariners, so Kansas City will be known to the world through its Liberty Memorial, on the pinnacle of which will be an altar from which will issue a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, a constant inspiration and monitor for peace.”¹³⁰ While it would be easy to say that such articles only represent the sentiments of their publishers, the presence of so many articles with this theme speaks to its resonance among Kansas Citians more broadly. This is not just empty rhetoric employed by “men on high” (LMA and Kansas City newspapers), but rather the public statement of something felt, if not by all, then by many. The Liberty Memorial was of central importance to all Kansas Citians, making them worthy of inclusion among the great cities of the nation and the world. Interestingly, this sentiment would ultimately manifest as accepted fact that the Liberty Memorial stood as *the* national memorial, whether directly stated or not.

The laying of the cornerstone of the Liberty Memorial took place on Sunday, November 9, 1924. The construction difficulties and delays of the past three years were evident on that November day. Although the central element, the 217-foot tower, had risen to its full height, naked concrete showed at the top, awaiting the arrival of sculptor Robert Aiken’s four guardian spirits. Symbolizing Honor, Courage, Sacrifice, and Patriotism, they would not arrive in Kansas City until the late spring of 1925. Of the two exterior structures on either side of the tower,

¹³⁰ “Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial, Fast Taking Form, Will Make City Known All Over the World,” *Kansas City Journal*, August 24, 1924, LMA Press Clippings, volume IV.

Memory Hall and the museum building, only the former was complete, with scaffolding clearly visible on and around the latter.¹³¹ This did not deter Kansas Citians from coming together in what the *Star* called “A Pledge of Memory.” The *Journal* reported on the somber atmosphere, so different from the celebratory mood of 1921:

With bared heads, the throng of more than 25,000 persons stood in silence as the great stone was sealed and thrust into the niche in the shaft where it will remain for a century.

Sacred music by the Haydn chorus rolled out across the plateau on which the memorial stands and which was filled with reverent thousands as the brass casket containing messages to future generations was placed in the hollow stone, to remain until it is opened a hundred years hence.¹³²

Neither of the two remaining memorials in this study witness such a moment. Not in the national or international spotlight, Kansas Citians focused attention on *their* memorial, and the men it commemorated. It was, as the *Times* described, a renewal of the pledge made in 1919; a pledge to pay tribute to those that died, and a pledge never to forget.¹³³ Perhaps it was this pledge that carried Kansas Citians through the lengthy construction project; although construction woes continued to plague the LMA, never was there talk of abandoning or curtailing the project. Plans for the 1926 dedication went ahead, even though when that moment arrived, the memorial’s face

¹³¹ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 74; Aber, “An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial,” 57–58. The naming of Memory Hall caused disagreements with the American Legion, who believed that due to their assistance with funding, would have the building named in honor of the organization, an issue covered by Aber’s “An Architectural History of the Liberty Memorial.”

¹³² “25,000 Bow at Memorial Stone Ritual,” *Kansas City Journal*, November 9, 1924, LMA Press Clippings, volume IV.

¹³³ “Renew the Pledge,” *Kansas City Times*, November 9, 1924, LMA Press Clippings, volume IV.

still lacked its centerpiece frieze and landscaping on the north lawn (the side facing Union Station), forcing the ceremony to be held on the memorial's south mall instead.¹³⁴

Questions over missing features and landscaping were not the only factors that influenced changes to the 1926 ceremony. Per the *Star*, the “Dedication of the Liberty Memorial, which had been set tentatively for May 31 [Memorial Day], has been postponed until fall...Mentioned among [reasons for putting off the date] was the inability of President Coolidge to attend in May...”¹³⁵ This is the first mention of Coolidge as a possible attendee within the LMA press clippings, but it indicates that the LMA had already reached out to the White House in private. That they continued to do so is evident from the president's “Message of Acceptance,” published in the *Journal* in October. “Referring to your telegram of September 10,” Coolidge's secretary states, “the President and Mrs. Coolidge are delighted to find themselves able to accept the cordial invitation of the Liberty Memorial association to attend the dedication of the Memorial on Armistice day.”¹³⁶ Though not specifically discussed in the Kansas City newspapers, it is likely that the news of Coolidge's acceptance was greeted with enthusiasm, as once more the city and their memorial would stand in the national spotlight. In a departure from all previous language describing the memorial's significance beyond Kansas City, there are numerous references to the Liberty Memorial as a “national shrine” and “national memorial.” This is most likely the origin of the current understanding of those in Kansas City and at the museum-memorial that the Liberty Memorial stands as the national World War I memorial. LMA president R.A. Long stated in 1926 that “The very fact that President Coolidge will be here to

¹³⁴ Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 78.

¹³⁵ “Shaft Dedication in Fall,” *Kansas City Star*, March 15, 1926, LMA Press Clippings, volume V.

¹³⁶ “Coolidge to Dedicate the Liberty Memorial on Armistice Day,” *Kansas City Journal*, October 19, 1926, LMA Press Clippings, volume V.

give the principal address at the dedication is an indication that our memorial to the soldier dead is something more than a local tribute. With his visit, it assumes national importance.”¹³⁷ The *Post* echoed this, asserting that “The presence of Coolidge means dedication will be more than city celebration.”¹³⁸

Kansas City had grabbed national headlines in the past with the selection of Magonigle as architect, the elaborate and well-attended 1921 site dedication, and the praise by leading architects for the Liberty Memorial design, but what occurred in 1926 went beyond this. The first two paragraphs of President Coolidge’s speech speak volumes, and are worth quoting in full:

It is with a mingling of sentiments that we come to dedicate this memorial. Erected in memory of those who defended their homes and their freedom in the World War, it stands for service and all that service implies. Reverence for our dead, respect for our living, loyalty to our country, devotion to humanity, consecration to religion, all of these and much more is represented in this towering monument and its massive supports. It has not been raised to commemorate war and victory, but rather the results of war and victory, which are embodied in peace and liberty. In its impressive symbolism it pictures the story of that one increasing purpose declared by the poet to mark all the forces of the past which finally converge in the spirit of America in order that our country as “the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time,” may forever hold aloft the glowing hope of progress and peace to all humanity.

Five years ago it was my fortune to take part in a public service held on this very site when General Pershing, Admiral Beatty, Marshal Foch, General Diaz, and General Jacques, representing several of the allied countries in the war, in the presence of the American Legion convention, assisted in a normal beginning of this work which is now reaching its completion. To-day I return at the special request of the distinguished Senators from Missouri and Kansas, and on the invitation of your committee on arrangements, in order that I may place the official sanction of the National

¹³⁷ “Envisaged as U.S. Shrine,” *Kansas City Times*, October 19, 1926, LMA Press Clippings, volume V.

¹³⁸ “Nation’s Eyes Will Turn to Liberty Shaft,” *Kansas City Post*, October 19, 1926, LMA Press Clippings, volume V.

Government upon one of the most elaborate and impressive memorials that adorn our country. It comes as a fitting observance of this eighth anniversary of the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918. In each recurring year this day will be set aside to revive memories and renew ideals. While it did not mark the end of the war, for the end is not yet, it marked a general subsidence of the armed conflict which for more than four years shook the very foundations of western civilization.¹³⁹

Nowhere does Coolidge specifically reference the Liberty Memorial, nor its original purpose as a means of commemoration for Kansas City. Instead, the line that stands out is “To-day I return at the special request of the distinguished Senators from Missouri and Kansas...in order that I may place the official sanction of the National Government upon one of the most elaborate and impressive memorials that adorn our country.” From the moment he uttered those words, Coolidge cemented for all Kansas Citians the notion that their memorial was one of national significance. Ninety-two years on, that sentiment has not diminished.

¹³⁹ “Address at the Dedication of the Liberty Memorial at Kansas City, Missouri,” <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=413>. It is interesting that Coolidge quotes Tennyson’s “Locksley Hall” in the first paragraph, rather than an American poet.

Chapter 2 - “A Band Stand for Potomac Park: Local Remembrance on the National Mall

Encompassing several hundred acres in downtown Washington, D.C., the National Mall stands as one of the most heavily visited cultural sites in the United States, its museums and memorials recognizable to Americans and international visitors alike. One memorial, however, remains largely elusive. Situated in Ash Woods between the National World War II Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial, the District of Columbia War Memorial is dedicated to those men and women of the district who served and gave their lives in the First World War. Designed by famed Capitol architect Frederick Brooke and dedicated by President Herbert Hoover in 1931, the memorial effectively speaks to the artistic diversity of postwar remembrance in the United States. Built to resemble a classic Doric temple, the structure also maintains functionality through its use as a bandstand, thus supporting the idea that traditionalism and modernism co-existed in the interwar period.

What is perhaps most striking about the D.C. war memorial, however, is its location. Despite the “memorial mania” of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (discussed in the Introduction above), it remains the only war memorial in West Potomac Park and the only District memorial on the National Mall. To answer the question of how this happened, one must consider both the importance of placement regarding memorial construction as well as the early history of the National Mall itself. As seen in the discussion of the Liberty Memorial, city leaders often selected a prominent site for World War I memorials to “show off” their city to incoming travelers. This same sense of civic pride likely drove District residents and commission members in their choice of location for the D.C. war memorial. They were aided by the newly formed Commission of Fine Arts, which sought to implement plans laid out in the 1902 Senate Park

Commission. In this unique way then, the collective memory of the D.C. memorial is directly linked to the development of the National Mall, with artistic design and structural placement taking on greater importance here than in Kansas City or Manhattan, Kansas.



Figure 2.1. The District of Columbia World War Memorial, as shown on the cover of the 1931 dedication program. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

“The Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States”

Washington, D.C.’s historical development differs greatly from other American cities due to its role as the nation’s capital. While not the United States’ original capital city, an honor that belongs to Philadelphia, the “City of Washington” nonetheless came to embody the republican values upon which the country had been founded. As a result of the Pennsylvania Mutiny of 1783, when an angry mob attacked Congress at Philadelphia, the creation of a separate and distinct federal district surfaced at the Constitutional Convention in 1787.¹⁴⁰ The delegates eventually agreed in Article One, Section Eight of the newly drafted U.S. Constitution to give Congress the power to “Exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of Particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, Dock-Yards and other needful Buildings.”¹⁴¹ James Madison also argued in favor of a federal district in *Federalist Papers No. 43*, writing that the national capital needed to be distinct from the states in order to provide for its own maintenance and safety.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Harvey W. Crew, William Bensing Webb and John Wooldridge, *Centennial History of the City of Washington, D.C.* (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1892), 66.

¹⁴¹ U.S. Const., article I, section 8, clause 1.

¹⁴² Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. Robert A. Ferguson (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2006), 239–48.

While all agreed on the district's necessity, strong disagreement arose as to the precise location of the new capital, with northern states advocating New York or Philadelphia and southern states preferring a site closer to their own interests. With congressional deadlock threatening to undermine the newly formed nation, a compromise was reached, largely through the efforts of Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. Jefferson and Madison agreed to Hamilton's plan for federal assumption of state debts, as laid out in his *First Report on Public Credit*, and Hamilton agreed to support placement of the new federal capital on land donated by Virginia and Maryland.¹⁴³ The resulting Residence Act of 1790 stated "That a district or territory not exceeding ten miles square, to be located, and hereafter directed, on the River Potomac, at some place between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and Connogocheque be, and the same is hereby, accepted for the permanent seat of the Government of the United States."¹⁴⁴

Ten years later, John Adams became the first president to inhabit the newly constructed President's House in 1800. The onset of official government business in Washington necessitated a more definitive political organization of the District. To this end, Congress passed the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801, placing the District under congressional jurisdiction and organizing the unincorporated territory within district lines into Washington and Alexandria Counties. The existing cities of Georgetown and Alexandria could maintain their

¹⁴³ See Darren Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 2005), and Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ Columbia Historical Society (Washington, D.C.), comp., *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, Volume 2* (Washington, DC: The Society, 1899), 49.

own municipal governments, with the latter returned to Virginia in 1846.¹⁴⁵ However, this system proved insufficient for handling the increased population growth caused by the expansion of the federal government during the Civil War. The situation grew so dire in the postwar years that some Congressmen suggested relocating the capital, a proposition firmly rejected by President Ulysses S. Grant.¹⁴⁶ In response to the president's lobbying, Congress passed the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1871. This stated "That all that part of the territory of the United States included within the District of Columbia be, and the same is hereby, created into a government by the name of the District of Columbia, by which name it is hereby constituted a body corporate for municipal purposes..."¹⁴⁷ Although still under the authority of Congress, the new government consisted of a governor and locally elected assembly as well as a board of public works, the latter representing the more significant addition due to its direct effect on modernizing the capital. Despite the replacement of the territorial government after 1874, direct Congressional rule continued until the late twentieth century.

The above discussion highlights an important theme to any work pertaining to the District: its reliance on Congress. This unique political culture, with federal legislators rather than local leaders holding the reins of power, "retarded growth and stifled development."¹⁴⁸ For

¹⁴⁵ "An Act Concerning the District of Columbia February 27, 1801," Statutes at Large, 6th Congress, 2nd Session, from Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=002/llsl002.db&recNum=140>.

¹⁴⁶ Fergus Bordewich, *Washington: The Making of the American Capital* (New York: Harpers-Collins, 2008), 272.

¹⁴⁷ "An Act to Provide a Government for the District of Columbia February 21, 1871," Statutes at Large, 43rd Congress, 3rd Session, from Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=016/llsl016.db&recNum=0454>.

¹⁴⁸ Howard Gillette, Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 26.

decades, “the population of the city was very sparse and limited in numbers, and confined almost exclusively to the persons and their families who were in one way or another employed by the General Government.”¹⁴⁹ Despite the construction of federally sponsored canals and railroads in the early nineteenth century, Congress remained largely uninterested in D.C. affairs. This fractured and incomplete reality of Washington as a municipality contrasted sharply with the image of the federal city as a symbol of national power. During his 1842 visit to the United States, Charles Dickens poignantly spoke to this discontinuity, noting that the young capital had not yet lived up to expectations but possessed the ability to achieve greatness:

It is sometimes called the City of Magnificent Distances, but it might with greater propriety be termed the City of Magnificent Intentions; for it is only on taking a bird’s-eye view of it from the top of the Capitol, that one can at all comprehend the vast designs of its projector, an aspiring Frenchman. Spacious avenues, that begin in nothing, and lead nowhere; streets, mile-long, that only want houses, roads and inhabitants; public buildings that need but a public to be complete; and ornaments of great thoroughfares, which only lack great thoroughfares to ornament—are its leading features.¹⁵⁰

The potential observed by Dickens in 1842 appeared closer to fruition several decades later. As discussed above, however, the city’s infrastructure became overburdened because of Civil War era population growth and led to the Organic Act of 1871. The appointment of Alexander Robey Shepherd as governor in 1873 and the arrival of the City Beautiful Movement to the capital in the 1880s initiated a physical transformation of the District, discussed in a later section. Establishment of the Senate Park Commission in 1901–02, a monumental achievement

¹⁴⁹ Crew, Webb and Wooldridge, *Centennial History of the City of Washington, D.C.*, 181.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1913), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/675/675-h/675-h.htm#page94>.

given the nature of Washington politics, laid the groundwork for Washington's modern cultural core and thus for the D.C. War Memorial itself.

“A Grandly Conceived Foundation”

The multifaceted initiative behind the Senate Park Commission traced its roots to the designs of Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French engineer who served under George Washington during the Revolutionary War. In September 1789, with discussions regarding the federal capital underway, L'Enfant wrote the new president expressing his ardent desire to play a leading role in laying the foundation “of a city which is to become the Capital of this vast Empire.”¹⁵¹

Following passage of the Residence Act, the Frenchman received his official appointment to design the new capital city under the supervision of three commissioners selected by Washington. Echoing the work of the famous landscape architect Andre Le Notre, designer of Louis XIV's palace at Versailles, L'Enfant's plan “comprised broad traverse streets and avenues, numerous open squares, circles, and triangular reservations and parks, all of which were designed to be so drawn that from the intersection of any two or more streets and avenues the horizon would be visible. The locations of the public buildings were indicated, and everything was designed upon a most spacious scale.”¹⁵² For the city center, L'Enfant designed a “grand avenue,” laid out on a mile long east-west axis in line with the “Congress House” and meant to serve as the model for all federal parks. Designs for this space, the Mall, included public walks,

¹⁵¹ “To George Washington from Pierre L'Enfant, 11 September 1789,” Founders Online, National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-04-02-0010> [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 4, *8 September 1789–15 January 1790*, ed. Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993, pp. 15–19)].

¹⁵² Crew, Webb and Wooldridge, *Centennial History of the City of Washington, D.C.*, 100.

elaborate waterworks and a ceremonial avenue suitable for “spacious houses and gardens.”¹⁵³ The Frenchman also planned another avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, to connect Congress with the President’s House. Taken as a whole, this unified view of Washington rested on a theory of urban growth and development that was original and far in advance of its time.¹⁵⁴ L’Enfant’s stubborn unwillingness to deviate from this planning strategy, however, as well as his refusal to work in tandem with President Washington’s commissioners, ultimately led to his dismissal in 1792. L’Enfant’s intent as well as the comprehensiveness of his design for the city would not be realized for another century.

L’Enfant’s Mall remained largely undeveloped and neglected until the 1840s, when British scientist James Smithson’s 1826 bequest “of the whole of my property...to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the Increase and diffusion of knowledge among men” set in motion the beginnings of the District’s cultural core.¹⁵⁵ The cornerstone laying for Smithsonian Castle coincided with the onset of construction of Robert Mill’s obelisk monument to George Washington; although the Mall still looked like a “marshy and desolate waste,” these structures soon defined the western “vista” when viewed from the Capitol terrace.¹⁵⁶ To further redeem the Mall from physical neglect, President Milliard Fillmore commissioned Andrew Jackson

¹⁵³ Heather Wanser, “The Unveiling of Andrew Jackson Downing’s Victorian Plan for Washington, D.C., 1851,” <http://cool.conservation-us.org/coolaic/sg/bpg/annual/v09/bp09-11.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Frederick Gutheim and Antoinette J. Lee, *Worthy of the Nation: Washington, D.C. from L’Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 24.

¹⁵⁵ “James Smithson Last Will and Testament, October 23, 1826,” Smithsonian Institute Archives, <http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/stories/last-will-and-testament-october-23-1826>.

¹⁵⁶ Sue Kohler and Pamela Scott, eds., *Designing the Nation’s Capital: The 1901 Plan for Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2006), 2.

Downing, America's pioneer landscape architect, to design the grounds on the Mall as well as the parks north and south of the President's House. A firm adherent to the principles of romanticism, Downing believed that a "natural" environment was healthier than the restraints imposed by the classical order. His plan thus deviated sharply from L'Enfant's in its Victorian vision of four individual parks, rather than one "grand avenue," with connecting curvilinear walks and drives defined with trees of various types.¹⁵⁷ Downing's untimely death in 1852, however, and the rise of financial and political obstacles like those faced by L'Enfant ensured the plan's incompleteness.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 brought a halt to any existing concerns over development of the Mall, but with the war's conclusion in 1865, the need for a park system became acute. As Charles Moore, chief aide to Senator James McMillan (member of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia and proponent of Senate Park Plan/McMillan Plan of 1902, discussed in detail in the next section) stated in his 1903 report,

...the development of urban life and the expansion of cities has brought into prominence the need, not recognized a hundred years ago, for large parks to preserve artificially in our cities passages of rural or sylvan scenery and for spaces adapted to various special forms of recreation. Moreover, during the century that has elapsed since the foundation of the city the great space known as the Mall...has been diverted from its original purpose and cut into fragments...thus invading what was a single composition.¹⁵⁸

Like Kansas City, D.C. witnessed an increase in population and physical size in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and the City Beautiful Movement stood as a means of addressing this. Although Moore, like his counterparts in the Midwest, believed a district-wide park system could

¹⁵⁷ Wanser, "The Unveiling of Andrew Jackson Downing's Victorian Plan for Washington, D.C., 1851."

¹⁵⁸ Charles Moore, ed., *The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 23.

mitigate the effects of urbanization and industrialization, his emphasis remained on L'Enfant's Mall. The "fragments" Moore speaks of are largely a result of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad's occupation of the Mall, the railroad having taken the place of the Washington City Canal in 1872. Only its removal from these public grounds would allow "that dignified approach to the Capitol for which the Mall was originally designed."¹⁵⁹

Moore's report is deceiving, however, as it appears to indicate the "disappearance" of L'Enfant's plan over the course of the nineteenth century. In fact, the essential elements had been retained (even as major changes had been made in the decades after 1792) and dominated public improvements of the postwar city.¹⁶⁰ Washington's renewed commitment to completing L'Enfant's plan corresponded with the affirmation of the city as the permanent capital of the nation. The future of Washington, D.C. as the capital was uncertain for almost a decade after the Civil War, to the point where cities such as Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Cincinnati were considered as alternative sites for the capital. Despite this, however, no one could ignore the city's unique culture, a culture created by the constant flow of politicians, foreign dignitaries, and civil servants across the span of nearly seven decades.¹⁶¹

The physical transformation of the District after 1865 fell on the Army Corps of Engineers, who "shouldered the federal government's responsibilities for the creation and upkeep of public works, buildings, and grounds..."¹⁶² One of the most significant projects for our purposes was the reclamation of the Potomac Flats. Occupying approximately three hundred acres above and below Long Bridge, now one of five bridges collectively referred to as the 14th

¹⁵⁹ Moore, *The Improvement of the Park System*, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Gutheim and Lee, *Worthy of the Nation*, 80.

¹⁶¹ Gutheim and Lee, *Worthy of the Nation*, 79.

¹⁶² Gutheim and Lee, 81.

Street Bridges, the flats offered no protection from severe flooding (as demonstrated in 1881) and gave off a pungent odor when exposed during low tide. Initiated in 1882, the reclamation project dramatically reshaped the area, giving birth to the Tidal Basin and Potomac Park, later divided into East and West Potomac Park. Though initial discussion over the land's use centered on commercial interests, park advocates were ultimately successful in obtaining congressional support for its use as parkland. In 1897, Congress set aside the 621 acres of reclaimed flats and the 118 acres of tidal reservoirs as "Potomac Park...to be forever held and used as a park for the recreation and pleasure of the people."¹⁶³ In subsequent decades, West Potomac Park took on crucial importance, as a key extension of the National Mall. It became home to the Lincoln Memorial in 1922, and much later, the Jefferson Memorial and war memorials to Korea and World War II. Prior to all (except the Lincoln Memorial) these iconic monuments and memorials, the park witnessed the construction of the small Doric temple-inspired bandstand commissioned by District residents to remember the First World War.

As momentous as the reclamation of the Potomac Flats was to the history of the D.C. War Memorial, one must also consider it in the context of the growing professionalization of architecture and urban planning. As early as 1853, when the New York state legislature authorized construction of Central Park, city planners sought to create parks "in the name of health and beauty and as a panacea for urban ills."¹⁶⁴ As urban and industrial growth intensified after the Civil War, architects trained in the Beaux Arts tradition centered in Paris and progressive reformers increasingly looked to create order out of chaos, with their efforts

¹⁶³ "An Act Declaring the Potomac Flats a Public Park, under the name of the Potomac Park," *United States Statutes at Large*, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/54th-congress/session-2/c54s2ch375.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas E. Luebke, ed., *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts* (Washington, DC: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2013), 9.

culminating in the City Beautiful Movement. As discussed above, this philosophy held that “city dwellers would become imbued with civic pride through elevating the design of a city’s streets, parks, and buildings—particularly public buildings...”¹⁶⁵ Certainly Kansas Citians would have agreed with this statement. In the nation’s capital, the renewed commitment to L’Enfant’s plan, the reclamation of the Potomac Flats, and the height of the City Beautiful Movement all occurred within the last decades of the nineteenth century. All three directly contributed to the 1901 Senate Park Commission, legislation that transformed the National Mall into what Americans are familiar with today.

The 1901 Senate Park (McMillian) Commission

The significance of the McMillian Plan to the District and thus the D.C. War Memorial cannot be overstated. The plan, as implemented over the course of the early decades of the twentieth century, directly shaped the D.C. we know today, particularly the “monument core” of the National Mall and Capitol Hill. Its coinciding with the City Beautiful Movement arguably contributed to its success and popularity; Sue Kohler and Pamela Scott claim that “Absent this development, the new vision of the Mall set forth in 1902 might never have been carried out.”¹⁶⁶ Further emphasizing this connection is the presence of leading architects such as Daniel Burnham, Charles McKim, and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. in the promotion of both the 1901 plan and the City Beautiful Movement more broadly. This professional contingent, though prime generators of the plan, were only half the equation, so to speak. Charles Moore stated that the plan “is the resultant of two movements—one popular, the other technical.”¹⁶⁷ From the outset,

¹⁶⁵ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 11.

¹⁶⁶ Kohler and Scott, *Designing the Nation’s Capital*, 30.

¹⁶⁷ Moore, *Improvement of the Park System*, 7.

the architectural profession understood that the plan's public reception was crucial to its ultimate success and adoption.

The Senate Park Commission had its roots in two events: the 1900 centennial celebration (in honor of the federal government moving to D.C.) and the 1900 annual meeting of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The latter was purposely held in D.C. to influence the reshaping of the Mall, then threatened by a potential new railroad terminal with elevated tracks. In preparation for the centennial celebration, the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia was designated to oversee all planning for the event. Fortunately for the future National Mall and D.C. War Memorial, the committee's chair was Senator James McMillian (R-MI). In Michigan, McMillian had worked to support the creation of Belle Isle Park; as chairman of the Senate committee, he actively promoted intensive infrastructure development in D.C., though he sometimes had personal (read "business") reasons for extending such support. Although numerous plans for the centennial celebrations were submitted, McMillian backed that of Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb, whose Avenue Plan featured a three-mile Centennial Avenue from Capitol Hill through the Mall to the Potomac River.¹⁶⁸

Bearing in mind the Corps of Engineers role in the reclamation of the Potomac Flats, Cobb's Avenue Plan triggered a power struggle between McMillian and the Army's engineers over control of public lands, but it also brought the intervention of prominent architects attending the AIA meeting. Several key points should be noted about the ensuing debates and disagreements. First, the AIA did not agree with Cobb's Avenue Plan; they wanted Congress to entrust the shaping of the capital core to the nation's "aesthetic elite" that had designed the

¹⁶⁸ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 17.

Chicago World's Fair of 1893.¹⁶⁹ To this end, a coalition consisting of McMillian, the AIA and the D.C. Board of Trade, which wanted backing for its park ideas and were long accustomed to working with McMillian, formed with the purpose of physically improving Washington while also seizing the planning initiative from the engineers.¹⁷⁰ In December 1900, McMillian introduced Joint Resolution No. 139 in the Senate, which authorized the president "to appoint a commission...to consider the subject of the location and grouping of public buildings and monuments...and the development and improvement of the park system."¹⁷¹ Three months later the resolution was altered on the recommendation of Charles Moore. Unable to overcome the Congressional opposition of Joseph Cannon (chairman of the House Appropriations Committee), the revised document called for "appropriate experts" to submit to the Senate a plan for the improvement of the entire park system of the District of Columbia." These "experts," once appointed, become known as the Senate Park Commission.¹⁷² The commission's initial members were Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr.; they then invited Charles McKim and Augustus St. Gaudens to join, leading Moore to write that the "committee was most fortunate in having secured the services of men who had won the very highest places in their several professions."¹⁷³

As stated above, this professional element stands as only part of the equation, as the architects themselves understood from the outset. Obtaining popular support for the plan was on

¹⁶⁹ Kohler and Scott, *Designing the Nation's Capital*, 11.

¹⁷⁰ Kohler and Scott, 13.

¹⁷¹ Glenn Brown, comp., *Papers Relating to the Improvement of the City of Washington, District of Columbia* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1901), 9.

¹⁷² Brown, *Papers Relating to the Improvement of the City of Washington*, 9–10.

¹⁷³ Moore, *Improvement of the Park System*, 9.

the minds of the commission as they worked through the remainder of 1901 in preparation for the public unveiling of their design, one that sought to blend the L'Enfant Plan with American and European precedents into a compelling vision expressing City Beautiful principles.¹⁷⁴ The Senate Park Commission's official report to the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia incorporated photographs and maps and presented a narrative to “appeal to the ordinary citizen and inspire enthusiasm among a broad constituency.”¹⁷⁵ But the commission did not end there; on the same day the report was submitted, a public exhibition featuring large models and an array of watercolors and oversized photographs opened at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Despite snowy weather, President Theodore Roosevelt and his staff, key members of Congress, and D.C. commissioners toured the displays—and loved what they saw. The public's (read the “nation's”) response, on which the fate of the plan ultimately rested, mirrored that of the politicians. Nationwide, newspapers and journals representing various disciplines touted the plan, which highlighted the proposed new Mall.¹⁷⁶ The “publicity blitz” helps account for the plan's resounding acceptance; this was not a project kept secret from the public by what had sometimes been termed the “aesthetic elite” but rather an initiative that would benefit all Americans, giving the people of D.C. as well as the nation at large reason to be proud of their capital city.

Senator McMillian called the plan “the most comprehensive ever provided an American city,” a statement that may have raised some ire among other cities (such as Kansas City).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 26.

¹⁷⁵ Gutheim and Lee, *Worthy of the Nation*, 131–32.

¹⁷⁶ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 26; Kohler and Scott, *Designing the Nation's Capital*, 33–35; Gutheim and Lee, *Worthy of the Nation*, 132.

¹⁷⁷ Gutheim and Lee, *Worthy of the Nation*, 132.

Despite the Michigander's somewhat grandiose pronouncement, the 1901 plan focused on two primary concerns: building a park system and the grouping of public buildings. Addressing the issue of public buildings led directly to the creation of a concentrated core on the Mall, characterized by monuments and museums surrounded by green space. This monumental core would consist of a unified collection of classical-inspired structures. The commitment to classicism fit existing architectural sentiments as well as symbolically linking a democratic United States with ancient Greece and Rome. As will be seen, this emphasis on classicism, viewed as the "correct" architectural style for the Mall by Charles Moore and members of the Senate Park Commission, explains the eventual design selection for the D.C. War Memorial.

Another Link in the Chain: The Creation of the Commission of Fine Arts

For all its influence, the McMillian Plan did have its detractors and was never formally adopted by Congress. Rather, the plan was continuously promoted and implemented incrementally over several decades, thanks in large part to the creation of the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) in 1910. The idea of establishing a federal art commission that would exercise control over federal art and architecture dated back to the 1850s, long before the City Beautiful Movement and the Senate Park Commission, but never mustered enough support in Congress. This sentiment increased over the subsequent decades, particularly (as one can imagine) among architecturally-minded people. An 1892 issue of the *American Architect and Building News* called for a "commission of architecture, which shall take a comprehensive survey of the whole field, both of the design and the location of our public buildings and monuments and see that the vast expenditures of the people's money...are turned to the best results in enhancing the beauty and the dignity of the national capital." The article called for both a commission to devise a city

plan (the future Senate Park Commission) and another to oversee the implementation of said plan (the future Commission of Fine Arts).¹⁷⁸

Despite clear evidence in the wake of the McMillian Plan that such an arts commission was needed, nearly ten years passed before the CFA came into being. In the interim, the Senate Park Commission faced numerous obstacles to their vision, including extensive battles over placement of the Grant and Lincoln memorials, seen as critical because they would “compel” the development of the Mall according to the plan.¹⁷⁹ A look at a map of the Mall today helps one understand the commission’s argument; the Grant and Lincoln memorials are in perfect alignment with the Capitol and the Washington Monument, thus providing the area with a center line around which all future cultural and memorial development could occur.

The concern of commission members Charles McKim and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. over the strict maintenance of “uniformity and harmony” as opposed to chaotic or “uneven” building is comparable to that of the civic leadership in Kansas City. Both groups actively sought to control the physical and aesthetic environment of their cities, believing that this would not only mitigate the effects of urbanization but also promote their city. Such actions were not without their detractors. Kansas City faced (ultimately unsuccessful) lawsuits from those tenants evicted from the future site of the Liberty Memorial, while D.C. newspapers such as the *Washington Evening Star* lambasted the elite nature of the commission and criticized its seemingly endless need for formality. Ironically, the *Star*, the primary newspaper of the District,

¹⁷⁸ Kohler and Scott, *Designing the Nation’s Capital*, 246.

¹⁷⁹ Kohler and Scott, 251.

later provided the primary coverage of the D.C. War Memorial, and its owner, Frank B. Noyes, chaired the memorial's commission.

If Congress and the public were wary about a potential “artistic takeover” of the Mall, President Theodore Roosevelt felt the exact opposite. From his first glimpse of the projected model of the Mall at the Corcoran, Roosevelt stood as one of the McMillian Plan's most steadfast supporters, going so far as to establish (through an executive order) the Council of Fine Arts in 1909. With most congressmen rejecting the authority of this order, however, Samuel McCall of Massachusetts introduced a bill in the House of Representatives in February 1909 to establish a federal Commission of Fine Arts. After intense debate, the bill passed, and the CFA officially came into being on May 17, 1910, its duty “to advise upon the location of statues, fountains, and monuments erected under the authority of the United States and upon the selection of artists for the execution of the same.”¹⁸⁰ Though an advisory board and not a designing board, several of the commission's original members were nationally-renowned artists; the full complement included Daniel Burnham, Daniel Chester French, Cass Gilbert, Thomas Hastings, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., Francis Millet, Charles Moore (future chairman of the CFA), and Colonel Spencer Crosby (secretary).

A Social and Cultural Renaissance on the Eve of War

The formation of the CFA and the initiation of the Mall's reconstruction according to the McMillian Plan coincided with tremendous physical and human growth in the nation's capital. Between 1880 and 1914, the population exploded from 175,000 to 438,000, with more to follow

¹⁸⁰ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 34.

during World War I.¹⁸¹ While most residents (white and black) were of southern origin, an influential number came from northern states, with significant numbers of German, Russian, and Italian immigrants. Although class distinctions certainly existed, most people were nonetheless skilled workers employed by a rapidly expanding federal government, creating a work environment that contrasted with their industry-oriented urban counterparts across the country.¹⁸² One important economic development was the newspaper business, specifically the previously mentioned *Evening Star*, owned and operated by the Noyes family since before the Civil War. Like the prominent Kansas City newspapers discussed in the last chapter, the *Evening Star* became the voice of the D.C. War Memorial, and its owner, Frank B. Noyes, became head of the memorial's commission. This is not surprising, as the *Star* had a history of "working closely with the city's leading capitalists to beautify and improve the capital," while "providing strong news coverage of local affairs and local history."¹⁸³

The District's physical growth, like that of Kansas City, was very much connected to the City Beautiful Movement. Suburban neighborhoods sprang up and flourished, thanks in large part to a new streetcar system. Beyond the Mall, green space and parks mitigated the effects of urbanization, though, like the removal of homes in Penn Valley Park, likely at the expense of some for the benefit of "all." D.C. also witnessed construction of its own Union Station, completed in 1907 and bearing a near-exact appearance to the Kansas City version. Melder

¹⁸¹ Keith Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions: A History of Washington, District of Columbia* (Washington, DC and Silver Springs, MD: Intac, Inc., 1997), 230–31.

¹⁸² Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions*, 256–71.

¹⁸³ Melder, 279.

argues that it was “During these years, Washington became a modern city.” Just like Kansas City, the District was shedding its old image and ushering in the new.¹⁸⁴

The Commission of Fine Arts contributed to this new image of Washington. Newly-elected President William H. Taft expanded the commission’s responsibilities via executive order, and its members embarked on implementing a classical agenda grounded in the principles of the Beaux-Arts. This “American Renaissance” combined national political aspirations with forms derived from imperial antiquity, with an emphasis on classical aesthetics; this would define civic architecture and the expression of national ideals for the next several decades.¹⁸⁵ The CFA’s ability to maintain this classicist design rests largely with its third chairman, Charles Moore (1915–1937). Moore first articulated his support for the Beaux-Arts in “The Improvement of Washington City,” published in *Century Magazine* during the push for the Senate Park Commission in 1902. Under his direction, the CFA played a significant (one might argue controlling) role in shaping design within the District, especially the Mall. As explained below, this accounts for the final design approved by the commission for the D.C. War Memorial as well as its placement in West Potomac Park.

The steadfast commitment to classicism occurred during a time of profound change, with new modernist ideas challenging and rejecting classical architectural language in favor of new artistic expression. As discussed above, this helps explain the diverse range of World War I memorials across the country. Despite this, however, Moore and his colleagues continued to focus on the McMillian Plan’s larger goal of treating the city of Washington as a “work of civic

¹⁸⁴ Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions*, 255.

¹⁸⁵ For more on the American Renaissance, see Richard Guy Wilson, *The American Renaissance, 1876–1917* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1979); Luebke, 57.

art” expressed in the language of Beaux-Arts classicism.¹⁸⁶ With the east-west axis extending from the Capitol to the Washington Monument as their guide, the CFA would transform the Mall into what we see today: the reinvention of a garden-esque landscape into a national forum.¹⁸⁷

A Wartime “Nerve Center”

The early initiatives of the CFA to transform the Mall were put on hold when the United States entered the First World War with a declaration of war on Germany in April 1917. Overnight, D.C. became the nerve center for the war effort, as the government rapidly expanded to move the nation from a peacetime to a wartime economy. The impact was immediate. Military personnel, civilian administrators and office workers arrived in ever-increasing numbers, forcing the government to construct temporary offices (“tempos”) along the Mall, buildings that were not fully dismantled until the 1960s. During the first six months of American participation in the war, Washington counted 80,000 new residents, including thousands of women and African Americans, and by the time of the Armistice, the city’s population reached over 525,000.¹⁸⁸ Newly arrived workers faced high rents and stiff competition for housing, shortages of everyday items, and a transportation system often unable to keep pace. Female workers and black workers also faced gender stereotypes and racial discrimination, even as government propaganda emphasized patriotic themes of unity and democracy.¹⁸⁹

Civilian government employees were joined by over 130,000 soldiers, either stationed in the capital or awaiting deployment to France. More than 26,000 men and women from the

¹⁸⁶ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 95; Moore, *The Improvement of the Park System*, 12.

¹⁸⁷ See Kirk Savage, “Inventing Public Space,” in *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 147–92.

¹⁸⁸ Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions*, 333.

¹⁸⁹ Melder, 333–39; For more on the divisive nature of World War I America, see David Kennedy’s *Over Here*.

District joined the armed forces, helping expand the ranks of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The details of their service (regarding numbers in each branch and division assignments) are described in a 1937 report by Frederick H. Brooke, chief architect of the D.C. War Memorial: “[National Guardsmen and inductees via the draft] fought in such memorable campaigns as the Meuse-Argonne, St. Mihiel, and in the Champagne... [Naval personnel] were represented on twenty-eight battleships; took part in convoy transport and transportation duty, mine laying and sweeping, and manned the naval guns in France. Marines, as part of the Second Division, fought through the above campaigns and at Chateau-Thierry.”¹⁹⁰

A “Band Stand for Potomac Park”

Though initiated within a month of the Armistice’s signing, the process of memorialization in Washington took a very different path than it had in Kansas City. Initial plans, though mixed, appeared promising. Frank B. Noyes, president of the Associated Press and owner of the *Washington Evening Star* (referred to hereafter as the *Evening Star* or *Star*), and his wife Janet, an active participant in numerous city civic organizations, spearheaded this movement. They issued a general call to the public for ideas in late December 1918.¹⁹¹ The language stands out from that seen in Kansas City and Manhattan, as the article emphasized the desire to construct a memorial to those residents that served *and* lost their lives, rather than only those that did not survive. The planting of 507 trees along Sixteenth Street, accompanied by bronze name badges, reflects this sentiment. Dedicated on Memorial Day 1920, this living

¹⁹⁰ Frederick H. Brooke, “The District of Columbia War Memorial,” Appendix C, District of Columbia War Memorial Historic Structure Report and Cultural Landscape Assessment (National Mall and Memorial Parks, PMIS no. 43699, May 2006). Hereafter cited as “The District of Columbia War Memorial.”

¹⁹¹ “Asks for Suggestions for War’s Memorial,” *Washington Evening Star*, December 26, 1918. Unless otherwise noted, all *Star* articles come from the MLK Public Library online database.

memorial served a functional purpose while commemorating those lost during the war. Even as this project was underway, however, Washingtonians “sought a more lasting, fitting reminder” of their men’s service and sacrifice in the Great War.¹⁹²

The idea for “a more lasting, fitting reminder” came from Janet Noyes. Sometime between the publication of the December 26 article and the following October, Mrs. Noyes suggested replacing an old wooden bandstand that stood at the east end of the polo grounds in West Potomac Park with a new marble structure that could serve as both bandstand and memorial to the District’s war dead.¹⁹³ The use of “war dead” here, instead of “those who served” may appear to indicate a change in sentiment or purpose, but this is not the case. As will be seen throughout the memorial process, both groups were included in the discussion, perhaps fitting given its functional, yet classical, design. First submitted by D.C. architect Frederick H. Brooke in October 1919, the design envisioned “an open temple, using the Corinthian order and low dome.”¹⁹⁴ With Frank Noyes, Brooke, whose design, though altered over the next few years, was the only one considered for the memorial, took his proposal to the Commission of Fine Arts, who (as noted above) reviewed all architectural elements submitted for construction on the National Mall. The Commission “expressed its appreciation of the efforts made in this matter, but advised that permission must be received from Congress for its erection, whereupon further action can be taken.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Harpers Ferry Center, *District of Columbia World War Memorial* (National Park Service site bulletin).

¹⁹³ District of Columbia War Memorial Historic Structure Report and Cultural Landscape Assessment (National Mall and Memorial Parks, PMIS no. 43699, May 2006), 6 (hereafter cited as NPS Report).

¹⁹⁴ Brooke, “The District of Columbia War Memorial.”

¹⁹⁵ Commission of Fine Arts minutes, October 17, 1919, 12, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. (hereafter referred to as CFA minutes).

“Permission must be received from Congress.” A seemingly simple statement, yet crucial to understanding the memorial’s development. Although privately funded like the Liberty Memorial and Memorial Stadium, the D.C. Memorial’s planned location in Potomac Park placed it on government property, a situation different from city or university property, particularly given the complex nature of D.C.’s political and geographical status. It is not known exactly how Noyes went about it, but with the help of Frank B. Brandegee (R-CT), a resolution was introduced in the Senate on January 26, 1920, “Authorizing the erection in Potomac Park...a memorial to those from the District of Columbia who served their country in the armed services of the United States in the Great War.”¹⁹⁶ On the surface, one might expect such a resolution to move through the appropriate channels fairly quickly; it was, after all, a simple proposal, only requiring congressional approval and nothing further. This perfect scenario, however, did not come to pass.

Following its introduction in 1920, nothing more on the D.C. memorial appears in the congressional record until 1924. It could be that the memorial project simply got lost in a sea of legislative paperwork as something not significant enough to warrant serious congressional consideration. After all, the immediate post-World War I years witnessed the Red Scare, race riots, a postwar depression, the Great Railroad Strike, and several attempts to manage global affairs, including the Washington Naval Conference and the Dawes Act, not to mention the unexpected death of President Warren Harding. A more nuanced explanation, however, revolves around the memorial. There are two critical elements to this; first, the number of memorial

¹⁹⁶ S. Res. 149, 66th Cong. 2nd sess. (January 26, 1920), Record Group 66, Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, box 207, World War I Memorials (General), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as World War I Memorials folder, NARA).

projects within the District then under consideration or construction, and second, the active postwar debate over memorials more generally. Between 1919 and 1924, the following monuments or memorials came into being: the First Division Monument (1924), the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (1921), the National Victory Memorial (never completed), the Grant Memorial (1922), the Lincoln Memorial (1922), and the Arlington Memorial Bridge (1932).

As Civil War memorials, the Lincoln and Grant memorials had the longest history, and their completion was a priority. Even as these were in the final stages of construction, congressional officials and the CFA were also focused on what became the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a national memorial mirroring the efforts of England and France (both dedicated in 1920) and one that had widespread support in D.C. and the country at large. Interestingly, it was President Harding's difficulty in getting to the Tomb's dedication that provided the impetus for the Arlington Bridge project, the direct transportation link between Arlington and the Mall while also adding to the McMillian Plan. If such projects were not enough, Moore and the CFA were also engaged in extensive debate with General Charles Summerall, president of the Society of the First Division and the division's former commander, over the proposed First Division memorial, a debate Moore lost, likely due to Summerall's influence in Congress.¹⁹⁷

The least familiar among the memorials of this era is the National Victory Memorial, one of several proposals to create a national memorial to those that fought and died in the First World War. Contrary to the late twentieth century, when national war memorials became expected

¹⁹⁷ "First Division Monument," National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/whho/learn/historyculture/first-division-monument.htm#CP_JUMP_2808422. For more information on the debate between Moore and Summerall, see Thomas Luebke, *Civic Art*, 112–13.

elements of the Washington landscape, a national memorial commemorating the World War was a new concept. Traditionally, war memorials were erected locally, a tradition adhered to even in the wake of a larger, and costlier, second world war.¹⁹⁸ In May 1921 the *Evening Star* argued that “To Washington, the memorial announcement is of particular interest not only because the edifice is to be erected here, but because it will go far toward developing national pride in the capital as the city of every American.”¹⁹⁹ This sentiment for a national memorial was echoed by former Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels less than one month later in a speech at the University of North Carolina, where he advocated for the “Erection of a national memorial for Americans who died in the World War.”²⁰⁰ To this end, President Harding and General John Pershing set the cornerstone for the National Victory Memorial on November 14, 1921, just days after Harding had helped dedicate the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.²⁰¹ The enthusiasm and support surrounding this memorial, combined with congressional inaction on the 1920 resolution and the multitude of large memorial projects as listed above, may have contributed to the delay of Brooke’s proposed District memorial.

One must also consider the opinion regarding memorials and memorialization held by the Commission of Fine Arts. In the years after the war, every meeting of the commission included discussion of one or more world war memorials in Washington. At a meeting in December 1919, the commission itself proposed “one great magnificent national memorial...located at the Basin

¹⁹⁸ Luebke, *Civic Art*, 111, 179.

¹⁹⁹ “The National Victory Memorial,” *The Evening Star*, May 28, 1921.

²⁰⁰ “Favors U.S. Memorial,” *The Evening Star*, June 15, 1921.

²⁰¹ Michael E. Ruane, “A D.C. Historian is Hunting Down Forgotten Monuments in Memory of ‘the Great War,’” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2014. The location of the proposed National Victory Memorial was Sixth Street and what is now Constitution Avenue, the current site of the National Gallery of Art.

on the axis of the White House...” to undercut the extensive debate over individual division monuments.²⁰² Despite this onslaught, which included Brooke and Noyes’s District memorial, the CFA was reluctant to move quickly, believing it was better to wait so as to let the “issues of the war and its results and ideals...detach themselves from the confusing and conflicting emotions” that World War I had brought.²⁰³ Moore himself echoed this in a letter to Marion, Kansas, architect Frederick Gowen. In July 1922, Gowen had written to Moore, proposing a “memorial monument as a national tribute to the dead of the World War.” Moore’s response is telling; he states that responsibility for such a monument lies with Congress and that “it is my impression that Congress will not enter upon the task of a World War memorial for many years to come. The Grant Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial are just being finished.”²⁰⁴

Moore’s implication here is clear: only with the passage of time could an appropriate memorial be built—and this is a good thing. Moore and the CFA were not alone in such sentiments. While the alacrity with which the Liberty Memorial was conceived and constructed suggest otherwise, many individuals and organizations within the art and architecture world cringed at the thought of a mass outpouring of memorials as seen in the decades after the Civil War. Newspapers also addressed this issue. An article from the *Fairfax Herald*, dated a few weeks prior to Gowen’s letter to Moore, critically and with a tone of sarcasm contrasts the plight of veterans (wounded and not) with the multitude of memorials appearing across the country. The anonymous writer argues that “The best reverence that can be paid to the memory of the

²⁰² CFA minutes, December 12, 1919. The location the commission is discussing here is the current location of the Jefferson Memorial. The CFA later moved away from this idea, as indicated in the minutes from November 15–16, 1923, where they discuss placing the proposed Theodore Roosevelt Memorial at the Basin location.

²⁰³ NPS Report, 7.

²⁰⁴ Frederick Gowen to Charles Moore, July 31, 1922, World War I Memorials folder, NARA.

dead is that the living shall be prosperous and happy.” He (or she) continues that too many memorials devalue their significance: “We do not object to all memorials for which there is a real purpose—but we fear there are too many erected merely in order to give the mayor or candidate for mayor an opportunity to make a stirring speech.”²⁰⁵ While not designed as a national memorial, these discussions could still have contributed to the slow implementation of the D.C. memorial.

These reservations on memorials notwithstanding, the public had its first glimpse of Brooke’s proposed District memorial in December 1923, when one of the architect’s original drawings appeared in the *Evening Star*. This is quite likely the result of calculations made by Frank Noyes, and perhaps Brooke as well; with the resolution stalled and the CFA contending with multiple projects and the personal views of its members on memorials, the two hoped that galvanizing public support would pressure Congress to act. Under the misleading headline “Temple of Music Project Approved,” the article stated that the edifice would be “a white marble structure for band concert” erected on either “the site of the bandstand at [the] polo grounds or some other spot in Potomac Park.”²⁰⁶

The project was certainly not approved, nor was the design, but this bold strategy may have influenced the events of the following spring. Although the exact date and senator responsible is unknown, resolution S.J. Res. 73 was introduced to appoint a commission to fund and construct a memorial to the District in Potomac Park. Referred to and approved by the Committee on the Library on May 29, 1924, it was then reported “to the House with the

²⁰⁵ “Too Many Memorials,” *Fairfax Herald*, July 9, 1922, World War I Memorials folder, NARA. The newspaper city is speculated, based on the presence of an article on the back of this one from Cherryville, a suburb of Arlington. The *Fairfax Herald* is the only newspaper in the vicinity with “Herald” in the title.

²⁰⁶ “Temple of Music Project Approved,” *Evening Star*, December 14, 1923.

recommendation that it do pass.”²⁰⁷ Nine days later, and over four years after Brandegee’s original resolution, Congress passed Public Resolution no. 28, officially creating the District of Columbia War Memorial Commission and stipulating that the memorial was to be “of artistic design suitable for military music and shall take the place of the present wooden bandstand in Potomac Park.”²⁰⁸

Refining the Design and Location of Brooke’s Memorial

While certainly a significant moment in the history of the D.C. Memorial, the 1924 resolution represents only the beginning of the project, as it merely created a formal commission. That organization first met on December 12, 1924, in Frank Noyes’s office, with Noyes unanimously selected permanent chairman of the commission and additional members’ roles assigned. Frederick Brooke was not present, but Noyes showed the architect’s 1919 drawings to the commission and read a letter from Brooke where he expressed his “great interest” in the project. Unfortunately, there is no record as to what the men assembled thought of these original plans, but given subsequent events, it seems unlikely there were major objections to either Brooke’s concept or his role as lead architect.²⁰⁹ As stated above, there is no evidence anyone else was ever considered for the job, nor was there discussion regarding a design competition, a very different scenario than in Kansas City. It is not even known how Brooke came to submit a design proposal to Noyes in the first place; he did serve in the First World War but only had one

²⁰⁷ “District of Columbia World War Memorial Commission,” H.R. Rep. No. 897, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook, Washington, D.C., A-F, Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Washingtoniana Collection).

²⁰⁸ NPS Report, 7.

²⁰⁹ NPS Report, 7. The citation in the NPS report is for minutes of the CFA held in the National Archives, College Park, though how it came here is unknown. The war memorial commission files (minutes, documents, etc.) have not been located, and are likely lost to history.

major project to his credit at the time of his submission and was not yet certified to practice architecture in the District. Brooke was, however, qualified for the job; he graduated from Yale in 1899 and attended the University of Pennsylvania for one year before moving to Paris to study at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux Arts.²¹⁰

There may not have been major objections to Brooke's 1919 design at the December meeting, but it would nonetheless undergo several alterations before completion. The first hurdle was the CFA, a formidable obstacle indeed given the firm opinions of its chairman. In March 1925, Brooke, now joined by associate architects Nathan C. Wyeth and Horace W. Peaslee, submitted a slightly modified design to the CFA for consideration. Wyeth and Peaslee's exact roles are unknown; aside from their names appearing on the 1925 drawings and the final base inscription, they are rarely mentioned in contemporary accounts.²¹¹ The commission's response came in a letter to Brooke from Charles Moore, dated April 25, 1925. Regarding the design, he says:

...we understand that you have consulted with the leader of the Marine Band as to the space required for the accommodations of the musicians. This being fixed, the problem then is to design a structure as harmonious and effective in character as is the temple in the grounds of the Villa Borghese [in Rome], which has been taken as the type for such structures. The Commission understands you will consult with [architect William Adams] Delano of the Commission and will submit further designs calculated to carry out these ideas.²¹²

²¹⁰ Brooke's one project was dormitories for the Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia. U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), miscellaneous, Board of Examiners and Registrars Application for Registration to Practice Architecture in the District of Columbia, March 27, 1925.

²¹¹ CFA, photograph files, District of Columbia World War Memorial.

²¹² CFA minutes, March 27, 1925. The letter was copied and added to the minute book as "Exhibit B," a common practice of the CFA.

After the appropriate consultation with Delano, Brooke submitted a revised design for the memorial. In late May, the commission reported that “Mr. Delano said that the new design is satisfactory to him and that he regarded it much better than the former...It provides for a band stand which will be a little higher to the top of the dome than the width, but lower than the surrounding trees. It will be 40 feet in diameter, large enough to accommodate the Marine Band.” Further attention was called to other architectural elements, but these were “a matter of detail [that] could be adjusted when the time comes to build the structure.”²¹³ Brooke was informed of the commission’s approval the next day with the warning that “If any serious changes are contemplated in either design or material on account of cost, or for any other reason, the design is to be resubmitted to the Commission.”²¹⁴ One gets a sense of the tentative nature in the CFA’s approval. There is no resounding “yes” in either the official minutes or Moore’s letter to Brooke, and any further changes require additional approval.

There was also another element at work: the location of Brooke’s proposed memorial. Although meant to replace the wooden bandstand in Potomac Park, debate arose over the exact placement of the structure, a debate not fully settled until 1928. Moore speaks to this in his April 1925 letter to Brooke, in which he addressed location before design, as well as in the May 1925 design approval. In addition to the clause regarding alterations in design or material, the acceptance of the design was conditional on location, as the minutes indicate: “The design was approved with the understanding that the exact location is to be subject to the result of a restudy of the park area and roadways in the location.”²¹⁵ Aesthetically, the CFA favored a location away

²¹³ CFA minutes, May 21, 1925.

²¹⁴ CFA minutes, May 21, 1925. Like in note 205, the letter from Moore to Brooke was copied and added to the minutes as “Exhibit D.”

²¹⁵ CFA minutes, May 21, 1925.

from the polo grounds altogether: the willow grove in West Potomac Park that was “opposite a point midway in the length of the Lincoln Memorial Pool,” very close to the memorial’s final location. This thinking is in line with the commission’s (i.e. Moore’s) determined adherence to the 1901 Plan. Thus, the 1924 resolution was altered to allow for the erection of the memorial “upon such other site in Potomac Park as may be selected by the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital and...acting with the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts.”²¹⁶

In perhaps yet another result of the maelstrom of forces at work in the District, the question of location was not addressed again until 1928. The person who helped jumpstart the discussion was Lieutenant-Colonel U.S. Grant III, Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, the organization referenced by Moore three years before. In an October 1927 letter to Brooke, Grant spoke of his desire “to get the location of the District of Columbia War Memorial definitely fixed.”²¹⁷ To this end, Grant, along with CFA member William Delano visited Potomac Park, marked their favored spot, “a location to be in a grove of willows about midway between the cross axis of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and the Tidal Basin,” with, of all things, a bottle. Shortly thereafter, Moore penned a letter to Grant granting CFA approval to the site.²¹⁸

This did not end the discussion, however; Moore and the CFA debated the memorial’s exact location throughout the spring and summer of 1928. They were particularly concerned with maintaining balance within the Mall, as laid out in the 1901 Plan. To this end, Moore requested

²¹⁶ NPS Report, 8.

²¹⁷ NPS Report, 9.

²¹⁸ CFA minutes, January 6, 1928; CFA minutes, January 6, 1928, Exhibit A (letter dated January 17, 1928).

that Grant undertake a series of surveys encompassing the entire area for a full understanding of how the memorial would fit within the existing axis.²¹⁹ Although this may appear overkill, Moore and the CFA felt a genuine responsibility toward upholding the character of the Mall. They also had to consider the building of future memorials and how those projects would fit with both the proposed District memorial and existing structures like the Lincoln Memorial. Finally, in August 1928, the commission officially set the site of the memorial, stating that “the site [selected by Grant and Delano] ...was the best available on the south side of the Reflecting Basin,” adding that “if in the future a memorial is contemplated on the north side of the Reflecting Basin it could be made to balance the bandstand...”²²⁰

“D.C. War Memorial Campaign Pushed”

Beyond the walls of the CFA, Washingtonians were unaware of the extensive debate regarding the location of their memorial. They did, however, realize the long-awaited project had finally gained some momentum. Almost a year after Brooke resubmitted his design, the *Evening Star* published an article announcing that “arrangements have progressed through all preliminary stages and a campaign for popular subscriptions for a fund of \$200,000...will be conducted during the first week in April.” The article went on to establish the exact nature and purpose of the memorial: “The memorial, it is emphasized by the commission, in no sense will be a national one, but simply dedicated to the veterans of the District of Columbia.... It is now the privilege of Washington, to signalize the honor and love and remembrance in which we hold those, the dead and living, who represented us in the defense of our national ideals and security. The

²¹⁹ CFA minutes, April 20, and May 24, 1928.

²²⁰ CFA minutes, August 6, 1928. The memorial that now sits on the north side of the Reflecting Pool, on a direct axis with the D.C. Memorial, is the Memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence, dedicated on July 2, 1984.

memorial...shall speak our own more intimate gratitude to those more intimately bound to us...”²²¹

Almost immediately, one notices a departure from the language utilized by Kansas City years earlier. Despite the memorial’s placement on the National Mall, the article’s emphasis was on the locale, and this was consistently maintained throughout fundraising, construction, and dedication. The simultaneous display of a plaster model of the proposed memorial at the Woodward & Lothrop department store also lends a sense of greater public awareness, especially as the model was “complete in every detail” and “attracting much attention.”²²² With the official opening of the fundraising campaign on April 11, 1926, the differences grow even sharper. In contrast to the bombardment of illustrations and full-page advertisements seen in several Kansas City newspapers, the *Star* took a toned-down approach. They did, however, start off on a high note, something that if known to Kansas City, may have caused envious looks. On only the second day of the campaign, the *Star* published the full text of a letter from President Calvin Coolidge to Frank Noyes, dated March 13. In it, Coolidge states, in part, that he has “enclosed a contribution to assist in erecting in Potomac Park a memorial” and considers the project “an exceedingly worthy proposal.” It is not known whether Coolidge was solicited or willingly donated, but his language in the letter appears genuine, especially if one considers this alongside his participation in the site and formal dedication of the Liberty Memorial. The president believed memorialization a cause worth his time and money. The accompanying article spoke of

²²¹ “D.C. War Memorial Campaign Pushed,” *Evening Star*, February 27, 1926.

²²² CFA, photograph files, District of Columbia World War Memorial; “D.C. War Memorial Campaign Pushed,” *Evening Star*, February 27, 1926.

Coolidge's subscription as "an example for all District residents," hoping the act would serve to provide "added impetus" toward achieving the \$200,000 goal.²²³

Initially, this proved true. Federal workers, "At the direction of the President's cabinet," received special permission "to receive subscriptions to the fund." As with Kansas City, D.C. discussed, then implemented, a "house-to-house method" whereby numerous organizations and civic groups pledged to "add the weight of their influence to the momentum of the movement."²²⁴ People with paid subscriptions to the newspaper could also fill out a form printed at the bottom of the page or next to articles pertaining to the memorial. After just four days, the total amount reached \$23, 050.²²⁵ In mid-May, the D.C. Department of the American Legion announced their "unqualified support" for the memorial, with the *Star* commentating that "The effect of the act of the department officials will be to speed up not only the raising of money among legionnaires who already have responded liberally, but among civic and patriotic interests generally."²²⁶ Later that month, the D.C. Department of the Disabled American Veterans voiced their "strong support" for Brooke's project, asserting that the wounded men "have a peculiar sentimental interest" in the memorial and claiming that it will "not only add to the architectural beauty of the city but combine a practical use in the form of a place where band concerts may be conducted."²²⁷

²²³ "President Gives to Memorial Fund," *Evening Star*, April 12, 1926.

²²⁴ "Federal Workers to Aid Memorial," *Evening Star*, April 4, 1926, Memorials and Monuments, Washington DC (R-Y), Washingtonian Collection (hereafter cited as Memorials and Monuments scrapbook).

²²⁵ "Memorial Fund Total Now \$23, 050," *Sunday Star*, April 15, 1926. The *Sunday Star* was the Sunday edition of the *Evening Star*.

²²⁶ "Legionnaires Aid Memorial Fund," *Evening Star*, May 19, 1926.

²²⁷ "Disabled Veterans to Aid Memorial," *Evening Star*, May 24, 1926.

This is worth noting for a couple of reasons. First, this active presence by the District's veterans, in this case, specifically the war wounded, in the memorial process is not visible in either the Liberty Memorial or Memorial Stadium. This is not to say that the wounded men of those communities did not support those commemorative efforts but that their voices were not heard as directly as in Washington. Secondly, the statement speaks to veterans' support for functional memorials as best representing the war, in this case, one that would remember the dead *and* the living. Not all veterans, however, shared the above sentiment, and during the second subscription in 1927 (discussed below), they made their voices heard. Their opposition noted that the design had not been approved by veterans.²²⁸ Like the direct language utilized by the Disabled American Veterans, this negative coverage stands out, albeit for a different reason. In the face of article after article speaking nothing but praise for the memorial, here are examples that dare to go against the grain, something not seen in all the Liberty Memorial press clippings. This represents a more nuanced, and perhaps more realistic, appreciation of public sentiment regarding the D.C. Memorial. Compare this to the Liberty Memorial, where press clippings reflect no such negativity, though such opposition could have purposefully been excluded.

Despite initial success, however, the fundraising campaign lagged as the weeks and months went on. As 1926 turned to 1927, the memorial fund remained well short of its \$200,000 goal. The reasons for this are difficult to fathom; the amount needed was not that great, and if one considers the ability of Kansas Citians to raise ten times that in ten days, the District residents' inability to raise much less is puzzling. In early April 1927, Captain Paul J. McGahan, the American Legion executive committeeman for the District, voiced his disappointment with

²²⁸ NPS Report, 14.

his fellow Washingtonians. Criticizing the city for lagging “behind every State in the Union in expressing its appreciation of the services of its sons and daughters who went to war,” McGahan declared that “Washington people have had an opportunity to contribute to the fund for its [the D.C. Memorial] erection, and that fund is not yet completed.” McGahan went on to contrast the lack of a District memorial to “the beautiful memorial recently completed in Kansas City, the memorial center in Indianapolis, both cities smaller than Washington, and even Atlantic City, where...was placed a memorial at the main entrance to the city.”²²⁹ Though the “memorial rivalry” that exists between the two cities today may not have existed in the 1920s, Kansas Citians likely would have been pleased their memorial received such accolades from some in the nation’s capital.

Without the memorial commission’s documents, it is difficult to know when they decided to reinvigorate the campaign by launching another fundraising drive and how much McGahan’s words played into the decision. It seems likely, however, that the Legion committeeman’s sharp rebuke had an effect, as only a couple of weeks later the *Star* announced a “Speed Campaign” to “assure erection of a memorial to the 535 men and women of the District of Columbia who gave their lives in the World War.” The campaign was to last one week, with campaign directors promising that “virtually every agency in the District will throw its force into the movement...”²³⁰

The news coverage reflected this sentiment, harkening back to the strategy employed by the Liberty Memorial Association in 1919. D.C.’s superintendent of schools, Dr. Frank W. Ballou, “made preparations with, with the consent of members of the Board of Education, to

²²⁹ “Scores D.C. Lack of War Memorial,” *Evening Star*, April 4, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

²³⁰ “Speed Campaign for D.C. Memorial,” *Evening Star*, April 24, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

bring to the attention of the 70,000 public school children of Washington the purposes of the memorial campaign....” Children would “be allowed to contribute 5 cents toward building this memorial” and “all of the children who contribute their 5 cents will be given buttons bearing the number ‘535’ and a small sketch of the Doric temple in West Potomac Park...”²³¹ The next day, the *Star* declared that “Police and Firemen” would also lend assistance in the fundraising campaign, with precinct stations and fire houses “suitably marked to advertise the purposes of the campaign.” Boy and Girl Scouts’ organizations were also to “play a prominent part in circulating information concerning the memorial and distributing the buttons, wearers of which will be known as contributors to the campaign.”²³²

With the second fundraising drive set to begin on Monday, May 2, campaign workers gathered at the New Willard Hotel for one final meeting. Over lunch, 220 men and 150 women heard various speakers, including Major General John A. Lejeune (USMC), “urge them to complete the memorial as a patriotic and civic enterprise of worth.” Frank Noyes’s son and chairman of the campaign, Newbold Noyes, “outlined to the workers final plans for the campaign and issued detailed instructions to the team workers.”²³³ These efforts suggest that the memorial commission, and perhaps Washingtonians more generally, had come to realize the value of an all-out, city-wide, organization-wide effort, the very thing that had made Kansas City’s fundraising so successful. There was also the public rebuke by the American Legion and others, whereby Washingtonians felt pressured, or even guilty, for not having raised enough money during the 1926 campaign. This was functionally akin to the propaganda images Kansas

²³¹ “Schools to Help Memorial Drive,” *Evening Star*, April 27, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

²³² “Uniformed Forces to Aid Memorial,” *Evening Star*, April 28, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook; “To Give Information,” *Evening Star*, April 28, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

²³³ “Campaigners Hear Memorial Appeal,” *Evening Star*, April 30, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

City newspapers had published when, with only days to go, the LMA remained short of the necessary funds.

Regardless of the motivation (in both cases), the strategy brought results. Four days into the second campaign, the memorial fund rose to \$43,231, with \$5000 alone coming from Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, and \$100-plus contributors receiving honorable mention as “Leading Contributors to District War Memorial.” By May 9, the amount had risen to \$77,256.²³⁴ Although this number was only half of what organizers hoped to collect that week, the memorial commission announced that the cost of the memorial (the structure, not landscaping and other miscellaneous costs) had been revised to \$155,000.²³⁵ Still tens of thousands of dollars short, the campaign committee pushed on. Employing language that was part pleading, part desperation, Newbold Noyes proclaimed a “Dollar Day” initiative on May 18, predicting that “the \$12,000 deficit in the \$155,000 needed would be entirely wiped out should each person not yet on the honor rolls become a ‘memorial builder’ on Dollar Day.” He went on to argue that “The memorial...can never stand for what it must stand for—all Washington’s reverent gratitude to our war dead—unless every Washingtonian...plays some part in the memorial’s construction.”²³⁶ This appeal to District residents’ remembrance responsibility, combined with tireless efforts of campaign workers, the true “unsung heroes” of not only the District Memorial, but of those in Kansas City and Manhattan, trimmed the deficit to just under \$6000.²³⁷

²³⁴ “Memorial Fund Raises to \$43, 231,” *Evening Star*, May 6, 1927; “Memorial Drive Reaches \$77, 256.31,” *Evening Star*, May 9, 1927.

²³⁵ “Memorial to Rise Despite Deficit,” *Evening Star*, May 9, 1927.

²³⁶ “Dollar Day in Aid of War Memorial,” *Evening Star*, May 18, 1927.

²³⁷ “Fund of War Memorial is Swelled to \$149, 138,” *Washington Post*, May 29, 1927.

The \$6000 deficit is misleading, however. On May 24, the *Star* proclaimed that “Organized labor threw its support behind the District of Columbia War Memorial last night at a meeting of the Central Labor Union...and authorized the executive board to confer with President William Green of the American Federation of Labor on ways and means of helping bring the campaign for funds to a successful conclusion.”²³⁸ This on its own did not present any problems, as the multitude of District laborers could certainly provide additional funds. Further down, however, Newbold Noyes, while mentioning how much Washington was lagging in building its war memorial, admitted that “Although it would cost only about \$155,000 to build the actual memorial structure itself without developments included in the plan to complete it...in reality the total cost would be higher and the campaign committee was still short about \$35,000.”²³⁹ So, contrary to statements made earlier in the month, the memorial commission was not satisfied with constructing a marble structure but foregoing the other elements in Brooke’s design. It seems likely that Noyes (or his father) reached out to labor, in hopes that bringing such a force to bear on the campaign would swiftly close the gap and allow the project to be completed in its entirety. This appeared possible with the announcement several weeks later by Newbold Noyes that “Complete success in the District of Columbia War Memorial campaign” would occur “as a result of a program adopted by organized labor in Washington to send the building fund over the top by October 1.”²⁴⁰

As it turned out, Noyes and the rest of Washington would have to wait far longer than October for the promise to become reality. As with the 1920 resolution, public information

²³⁸ “Organized Labor to Aid Memorial,” *Evening Star*, May 24, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

²³⁹ “Organized Labor to Aid Memorial.”

²⁴⁰ “Memorial Funds Assured by Labor,” *Evening Star*, June 14, 1927, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

pertaining to the memorial grew scarce until late May 1930, on Decoration Day, no less. Though perhaps merely a coincidence, the presence of an illustration featuring Uncle Sam carrying a bouquet of flowers and walking toward the Temple of Fame and Civil War Unknowns Monument, with an unknown obelisk and the Spanish-American War Memorial in the background in Arlington National Cemetery, suggests otherwise. The Temple of Fame is particularly striking as it is a near match to the design of the District Memorial. That this image was printed directly above the article on the D.C. War Memorial and located on the front page indicates a symbolic connection between the two.²⁴¹

In the same *Star* article is the statement that “In the interval which has elapsed since [May 1927] when that generous and patriotic assurance was given, various factors in the local labor conditions have...rendered it inadvisable to conduct the campaign necessary to fulfill the assurance given.” The exact nature of these “various factors” is unknown, but it was obviously a serious enough situation to warrant such a lengthy delay. A secondary explanation for the funding drive delays lies in the words of Frank Noyes; while expressing “the hope that construction in West Potomac Park may start next fall,” he also notes that “A minimum of \$20,000 remains to be raised. Pledges yet to be paid may reduce this.”²⁴² This hints at an apparent drawback of the 1927 fundraising campaign: the notion of “pledging now, paying later, an echo of the broader “buy on credit, pay later” mentality of the 1920s. Caught up in the moment, Washingtonians may have pledged more than they could afford, knowing that the

²⁴¹ “Decoration Day, 1930,” *Evening Star*, May 30, 1930. For more information on the Temple of Fame and the Civil War Unknowns Monument, see Robert M. Poole, *On Hallowed Ground: The Story of Arlington National Cemetery* (New York: Walker & Co., 2009), and the Library of Congress’s Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/det1994000570/PP/>.

²⁴² “War Memorial Aid Pledged by Labor,” *Evening Star*, May 30, 1930.

pledge was payable over several years, a problem that also plagued the efforts to construct Memorial Stadium. With the decline and ultimate collapse of the American economy in 1929, however, it is likely some people lacked the funds to make good on their pledges, hence the \$20,000 deficit. If this was indeed the case, it is fortunate for the memorial that organized labor could now make good on their promise of 1927.

Over the course of the next several months, Washington's labor organizations moved forward in earnest to complete funding for the District Memorial. On June 18, the *Star* reported that "The Central Labor Union campaign...is gaining headway rapidly," with plans to canvass individually "all union members in the city" for a contribution of fifty cents each.²⁴³ The following week, President Herbert Hoover publicly endorsed the memorial project, believing it worth the support of all District residents. One month later, Postmaster Walter Brown in a letter to Frank Noyes "noted with much interest the renewal of the campaign by your commission to complete the raising of funds for the District of Columbia War Memorial."²⁴⁴

As summer turned to fall, labor organizations continued the drive to complete their fundraising mission. It is worth mentioning here the dedication exhibited by men living during the early years of the Great Depression. At a time when the Department of Commerce estimated that close to three and a half million people were seeking employment, with every penny counting even for those with employment, the Columbia Typographical Union No. 10 "appropriated \$300 for the District of Columbia World War Memorial at its regular monthly meeting" in November 1930.²⁴⁵ Presumably, efforts continued through the winter and well into

²⁴³ "Labor Drive to Aid Memorial Gains," *Evening Star*, June 18, 1930.

²⁴⁴ "Hoover Supports Memorial Drive," *Evening Star*, June 24, 1930; "Brown Approves Memorial Plans," *Evening Star*, July 20, 1930.

²⁴⁵ "Printers Give \$300 for Memorial Fund," *Evening Star*, November 17, 1930.

1931, as labor and civic leaders hosted The Central Labor Union Exposition and Fair that June. Though “not enough profit was realized to complete the quota” for the memorial, this is the last mention of any fundraising efforts.²⁴⁶ The final total is not listed, but the memorial commission must have collected enough, as construction of the main structure and plans for the landscaping were well underway by then.

“Colorful Ceremonies Planned to Dedicate Temple Here November 11”

Even before the June 1931 exposition and fair, there were signs that the D.C. War Memorial would finally become a reality that year. In February, the CFA proposed that the memorial be completed in time for the start of the bicentennial of George Washington’s birth (1932).²⁴⁷ They may have felt comfortable publicly asserting this, as the memorial’s acoustics and its various inscriptions were the subject of two CFA meetings. Brooke’s suggestion for the latter, moving the names of the dead from the dome to the base, received the commission’s approval on February 16, with Moore also requesting a landscape plan “in cooperation with the office of Public Buildings and Public Parks.”²⁴⁸ One month later, any lingering doubt about the memorial’s construction that year was laid to rest when the *Star* announced that “Bids for the District of Columbia World War Memorial will be opened on Tuesday, March 31, and construction is expected to proceed in the course of the next few months.”²⁴⁹

Unlike the construction difficulties encountered in Kansas City with the Liberty Memorial, the District Memorial building process moved along smoothly, in part because the spot chosen suited construction needs quite well (and had been dealt with long before 1931) and

²⁴⁶ “Memorial Benefit Fair is Success,” *Evening Star*, June 29, 1931.

²⁴⁷ “War Memorial Will Be Pushed,” *Evening Star*, February 13, 1931, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

²⁴⁸ CFA minutes, January 6, 1931 and February 12, 1931; CFA minutes, February 12, 1931, Exhibit F.

²⁴⁹ “Bids to be Opened for Doric Temple,” *Evening Star*, March 14, 1931, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

because the structure itself was much smaller and more compact. Only a couple of weeks after giving the building contract to James Baird, Co., well known in Washington for many “fine structures,” the first materials were moved onto the site, “marking the beginning of actual operations on this city’s tribute to her hero dead.”²⁵⁰ The work progressed so well that by the end of May, the memorial’s “Completion in time for dedication on Armistice Day [is] now expected,” and the Danby marble from Vermont arrived in the capital one month later.²⁵¹ As the summer wore on, passersby in West Potomac Park witnessed the memorial’s rise, as did readers of the *Star*, which printed images of the construction process. It became clear that the memorial’s dedication on Armistice Day was assured.²⁵²

Running concurrent to the memorial’s erection was an effort as important as building the memorial itself: the gathering of names, both of those who served and those who died, in preparation for their placement on the finished structure. Collecting the names of those who served proved relatively simple, and when completed, the names were placed in the memorial’s cornerstone. Later, the following was inscribed on the spot, located on one side of the base: “Within this cornerstone are recorded the names of the twenty-six thousand Washingtonians who when the United States entered the World War answered the call to arms and served in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.” The presence of this inscription demonstrates the

²⁵⁰ “Temple Contract Given Baird Co,” *Evening Star*, April 4, 1931; “Materials Placed on Memorial Site,” *Evening Star*, April 17, 1931.

²⁵¹ “Work Progressing on War Memorial,” *Evening Star*, May 28, 1931; “War Memorial Marble Arrives from Vermont,” *Evening Star*, June 27, 1931.

²⁵² “D.C. War Memorial Taking Shape,” *Evening Star*, July 12, 1931, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook; “District War Memorial Rising,” *Evening Star*, August 3, 1931, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

District's commitment to remembering the living and the dead, in a manner not seen in Kansas City or Manhattan.

The more difficult task was compiling the names of those Washingtonians who did not come home. To ensure the list was accurate, the memorial commission established a special committee in May 1931, chaired by Major Gist Blair. He obtained the necessary records from the War Department and published the list "with a view to discovering through its perusal by the public whether there are any corrections, additions, or omissions which should be made."²⁵³ This was in many ways a more thorough and meticulous endeavor than that undertaken in Kansas City, given that the *Star* published several revised lists, separating them by military branch so as to avoid confusion. On September 20, the *Star* printed the committee's final draft of names, 499 in total. The compilation had been guided by two principles. First, "the person must have died while still in active service and prior to the official ending of the World War as declared by Congress, or to have been discharged for physical disability and died prior to November 11, 1918; and second, . . . the person [must have been] an actual resident and citizen of the District of Columbia prior to his or her entry into service."²⁵⁴ While this may seem exclusionary, the method of selection in D.C. mirrored that used in Kansas City; the names inscribed on the bronze tablet inside Liberty Memorial's Memory Hall were chosen in precisely the same way, speaking to the memorial's purpose as a local monument.

With construction close to completion, and both lists of names finalized, the only major issue left concerned the landscape surrounding the memorial. This project had been initiated in April 1931 under the direction of Major General Benjamin F. Cheatham, former quartermaster of

²⁵³ "D.C. War Dead List Issued," *Evening Star*, May 17, 1931.

²⁵⁴ "The District's Honor Roll," *Sunday Star*, September 20, 1931.

the Army, acting as chairman of a special committee within the memorial commission.²⁵⁵ The standout feature consisted of a memorial grove, designed to “perpetuate the memory of the heroic dead by living trees,” an element that brings a level of symbolic diversity not present in either the Liberty Memorial or Memorial Stadium.²⁵⁶ Thanks to a generous gift by Mrs. Noyes, the “first tree of the new memorial grove” was planted in late October. That same day, the *Star* announced that “With colorful and impressive ceremonies the District of Columbia World War Memorial will be dedicated Armistice Day morning at 11 o’clock, when President Hoover will accept the white marble temple for the United States.” Though brief, the ceremonies would include “a concert of music” by the United States Marine Corps Band, led by renowned conductor John Philip Sousa. Those not able or invited to attend would be able to listen in, “as the program will be broadcast by both the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and the National Broadcasting Co. (NBC).”²⁵⁷ The presence of Hoover and the ability of non-District residents to listen in on the ceremony provided a “national” air to the program, like the situation in Kansas City in 1921 and 1926. Both garnered national attention, even as they remained dedicated to their respective localities. As will be demonstrated below, this has significance for understanding the events in both cities within the last several years.

The week prior to the dedication ceremony witnessed various final preparations. Stands were erected for speakers and invited guests on the south side of the memorial, and informal invitations were “distributed” via the newspapers to the public, with emphasis on veterans and

²⁵⁵ CFA minutes, April 15–16, 1931.

²⁵⁶ “Memorial Grove will be Planted at Doric Temple,” *Evening Star*, October 14, 1931, Memorials and Monuments scrapbook.

²⁵⁷ “Memorial Tree Planted” and “Hoover to Accept D.C. War Memorial,” *Evening Star*, October 23, 1931; “Nation Will Hear Memorial Rites,” *Evening Star*, October 24, 1931.

those who contributed to the memorial fund. Ulysses S. Grant III was put in charge of mailing the formal invitations, which read as follows:

The District of Columbia Memorial Commission
and the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks
request the honor of your presence
at the ceremony attending the
Dedication of the District of Columbia War Memorial
on Wednesday morning, November eleventh
nineteen hundred thirty-one
at eleven o'clock
in the Memorial Grove south of the Reflecting Pool
West Potomac Park Washington, D.C.²⁵⁸

A detailed description of the ceremony appeared in the *Star* on November 10, with readers informed that the dedication of the District Memorial “will be the outstanding ceremony in the Capital and will be preceded and followed by other ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington, and at the tomb of the war president, Woodrow Wilson, at Washington Cathedral.”²⁵⁹ One should note that Armistice Day ceremonies were a major part of District (and national) life in the interwar period, marked not by triumphant speeches but solemnity and remembrance. Years after the memorial’s dedication, it remained a gathering place for commemorative events, even as the Second World War came to overshadow the First.

At eleven o'clock the following morning, thirteen years to the day and hour that World War I ended, Washingtonians finally witnessed the dedication of “A Memorial to the Armed Forces from the District of Columbia Who Served Their Country in the World War.” Though lacking the fanfare and throngs of people seen at the dedication of the Liberty Memorial

²⁵⁸ Invitation, D.C. War Memorial, entry 196, box 1 (Alexander Hamilton to Frederick the Great), Record Group 42, Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, Records Relating to Statues and Memorials, Records Concerning Statue Unveilings and Monument Dedications, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as D.C. War Memorial, RG 42, NARA).

²⁵⁹ “Hoover to Give Armistice Day Keynote, Dedicating Temple,” *Evening Star*, November 10, 1931.

dedication in 1926, it was nonetheless a noteworthy event. The ceremony opened with an invocation from an army chaplain and an introduction by commission chairman Frank B. Noyes. President Hoover then spoke, drawing connections between the nation and the locale, like Coolidge in 1926:

Great shrines in our National Capital mark reverent remembrance of those who have given sacrifice and glory to the nation.... We gather here today to dedicate a new shrine to those residents of the District of Columbia who served in the World War. This temple will recall for all time their services and sacrifices.

He then diverged from discussing the memorial to noting the significance of Armistice Day and the importance of protecting the peace “for which these men died” in the face of economic and political instability, echoing Coolidge’s world-view pronouncements in Kansas City (though Coolidge’s speech was far longer).²⁶⁰ Following Hoover’s address, the president of the American Gold Star Mothers, Mrs. George Gordon Seibold, laid a wreath on the memorial. The USMC Band then played “Taps,” the department chaplain of the American Legion spoke a benediction, and the event concluded with Sousa’s rendering of the “Star Spangled Banner.”²⁶¹

The District of Columbia is unique among the three memorials analyzed in this study. A local point of remembrance, it was nonetheless shaped by national forces due to its placement on the National Mall. Like in Kansas City, a strong sense of civic pride drove this placement, with District residents aided in their quest by a newly-formed Commission of Fine Arts looking to implement the Senate Park Commission. And like Memorial Stadium, discussed in the next chapter, the D.C. War Memorial defied black-and-white categorizations of traditional and modern memorials, proving that both could, and did, coexist in the interwar period.

²⁶⁰ “War Memorial Dedicated,” *Washington Star*, November 11, 1931.

²⁶¹ Program of Exercises, D.C. War Memorial, RG 42, NARA.

Chapter 3 - “A Glorious Meeting Place of Physical Contest:” The Creation of Kansas State University’s Memorial Stadium

In sharp contrast to the bustling urban environments of the Liberty Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial, Manhattan, Kansas, is a relatively small community located two hours west of Kansas City, in the northeast area of the state known as the Flint Hills. While the city has a connection to the military due to its proximity to Fort Riley, home to the First Infantry Division (the “Big Red One”), its central draw is Kansas State University (KSU or K-State), a land-grant school encompassing several hundred acres and currently home to over 25,000 students. Situated on the campus’s southwest corner is Memorial Stadium, dedicated to the forty-eight “Aggies” (as they were known from the university’s earlier incarnation as Kansas State Agricultural College) who died in the First World War. Constructed from native limestone and completed in phases over the course of several years, the football stadium stands as an example of utilitarian memorialization and one of many sport complexes built during the interwar period.

Unlike its counterparts in Kansas City and Washington, D.C., Memorial Stadium does not have any connections to the City Beautiful Movement. This, however, does not diminish the importance of aesthetics in its design. Rather, the conscious decision to construct a stadium in the form of a castle is reflective of both the overall appearance of the campus at the time as well as the role of physical culture in early twentieth-century American society. The latter reflects the connection of “manliness” and “masculinity” to physical contest via participation in athletics. Memorial Stadium thus served a dual purpose: it fulfilled a practical necessity at an institution looking to enhance its image while also symbolizing masculine ideals of strength and power. This form of remembrance illustrates the strong connection between physical culture and memorialization in the United States following the First World War.



Figure 3.1. Memorial Stadium in 1933. Courtesy of the Morse Department of Special Collections, Kansas State University Libraries, Manhattan, Kansas.

The “First” Land-Grant College in the Nation

The desire to create an institution of higher learning in Manhattan dates to the city’s early years of settlement. According to noted Kansas State University historian Professor James C. Carey, Colonel George S. Park, credited with locating the town site that became Manhattan, had come from Missouri “intent on creating an institution of learning in which academic study would be accompanied by practical work.” Although Park ultimately returned to Missouri, town leaders Isaac T. Goodnow, Joseph Denison, and Washington Marlatt adopted his plan, and are responsible for the vision that became Bluemont Central College in 1860. Never more than a

primary and preparatory school, “that little Methodist school” struggled along, even as its founders sought to convince the state legislature to locate a new state university in Manhattan.²⁶²

Governmental recognition of its obligation to provide schools for future citizens is expressed in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, where congressmen wrote that “Knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”²⁶³ In the decades prior to the Civil War, debate abounded over the higher educational system then present in the country, a system centered primarily on elitist institutions that lacked practical fields of study, such as the physical sciences, engineering, and scientific agriculture.²⁶⁴ At the forefront of this debate was dedicated scholar, Christian, and political activist Jonathan Baldwin Turner, who advocated for the creation of a publicly funded system to provide “industrial” education, suited for the needs of the working classes. Although controversial even among the farmers and laborers he was attempting to help, Turner’s views were nonetheless an important component of a larger political movement that called for the creation of agricultural schools.²⁶⁵

It was with such ideas in mind that Representative Justin Smith Morill (R-VT) introduced a bill to Congress calling for the creation of land-grant industrial colleges in 1857. Narrowly passed by Congress in 1859, President James Buchanan vetoed the bill. Following the secession of eleven southern states in 1860–1861, however, Morill reintroduced his bill. Passed and signed

²⁶² James C. Carey, *Kansas State University: The Quest for Identity* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 4–5, 10–13.

²⁶³ “Morill Act, 1862,” Milestone Documents, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=33>.

²⁶⁴ Carey, *Kansas State University*, 22.

²⁶⁵ “Jonathan Baldwin Turner,” *World Heritage Encyclopedia*, http://www.worldbooklibrary.org/articles/eng/Jonathan_Baldwin_Turner.

into law by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862, the Morrill Act, officially titled “An Act Donating Public Lands to the Several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts,” provided each state with 30,000 acres of federal land for each member in their congressional delegation. The land would then be sold by the states and the proceeds used to fund public colleges that focused on agriculture and the mechanical arts.²⁶⁶

Even as Congress renewed debate over Morrill’s proposed bill, Kansas carried on its own debate regarding the location of a state university as promised in the Wyandotte Constitution of 1859, the constitution under which Kansas was admitted to the Union in January 1861. As stated by C. S. Griffin, however, “It was one thing to write a provision for a state university into the constitution, and another thing to write it into law,” especially as this was not the only state institution to “parcel out among the chief towns of Kansas.”²⁶⁷ Seeking to have the institution located in Manhattan, the Trustees of Bluemont Central College Association resolved to “donate to the state of Kansas our College Building, library and apparatus together with one hundred and twenty acres, more or less, of land contiguous as a College site, on condition that the legislature locate here permanently the State University.” Understanding the value of such a selection to their growing city, the Manhattan City Council joined the effort, offering “an appropriation to

²⁶⁶ “Morrill Act,” Primary Documents in American History,
<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Morrill.html>.

²⁶⁷ C. S. Griffin, “The University of Kansas and the Years of Frustration, 1854–1864,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 32 (Spring 1966), 15.

defray the expense of two delegates to the State Legislature, who shall work to secure the location of the State University at Manhattan.”²⁶⁸

To this end, Representative William H. Smyth brought a bill to the legislature calling on the state to put the university in his city. After lengthy debate, and a visit to Manhattan from a specially-appointed committee, who thought the college site “almost perfect,” the bill passed the house by a vote of 43 to 19 and the senate by a vote of 17 to 8.²⁶⁹ It is evident, however, that intrastate politics were at work, with intense rivalry between the more western areas (such as Manhattan and its environs) and eastern ones, such as Lawrence. When the bill went to Governor Charles Robinson for his signature, Robinson, a Lawrence native opposed to any site but his home city for the state university, vetoed it. A subsequent attempt by Manhattanites to garner enough votes for a legislative override failed by a narrow margin.

Political infighting kept the state university from becoming a reality until 1863. In his inaugural address of that year, Governor Thomas Carney emphasized the need to create a state university, as “The Constitution directs especially your [the legislature] attention and mine to it,” while also drawing attention to the newly-enacted Morill Act. He stated that “A wise combination of the interests of the State, and a just application of the means which the General Government should grant, will enable us to do for education all that an intelligent people could ask or desire.”²⁷⁰ Carney envisioned *one* university to satisfy both goals, but the legislature had other ideas. Heavily divided over the final three competitors, Lawrence, Manhattan, and Emporia, it chose to use the Morill Act to its advantage, dividing the state university into three

²⁶⁸ J. T. Willard, “Bluemont Central College: The Forerunner of Kansas State College,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 13 (May 1945), 342–43.

²⁶⁹ Griffin, “The University of Kansas and the Years of Frustration,” 16; Willard, “Bluemont Central College,” 344.

²⁷⁰ “Inaugural Message of Governor Thomas Carney,” <https://kslib.info/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1029>.

parts. Sensing opportunity, even victory, Manhattan acted, once again offering the land of Bluemont Central College in exchange for the agricultural school.²⁷¹ Thus, on February 16, 1863, Kansas State Agricultural College (KSAC) became the first of the three public institutions formally approved by the state. In an additional blow to Lawrence and Emporia, Carney, perhaps owing to Kansas State's "first" status, decreed that "The ninety thousand acres of land granted to the State of Kansas by Congress, to endow a college for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts, shall be used solely for the endowment of said Kansas State Agricultural College of the State of Kansas, and for no other purpose whatever."²⁷² The dreams of Goodnow, Denison, and Marlatt had finally become reality.

Developing the Physical Landscape

During the final stages of Bluemont Central College's construction, Manhattan's *Kansas Express* spoke proudly of the "splendid, large three-story stone [limestone] edifice," stating that "Projects of building grand seminaries, universities and colleges are quite common in the numerous cities of Kansas; but so far as we are informed, we believe that ours of Manhattan is the only one which has been effectually built."²⁷³ This is not simply prideful exaggeration, however; drawings of the building (it was razed in the 1880s) show an impressive structure, with stone arches over front openings and semicircular arches in the cupola. The arches provide a subtle hint about Bluemont's long-term architectural importance. In consciously selecting the type of arch they did, the college's founders established an aesthetic precedent, one that influenced the design of Memorial Stadium nearly sixty years later.

²⁷¹ Griffin, "The University of Kansas and the Years of Frustration," 17–21.

²⁷² *General Laws of the State of Kansas, passed at the Third Session of the Legislature, Commenced at the Capital January 13, 1863* (Lawrence: "Kansas State Journal" Steam Press Print, 1863), 15.

²⁷³ Willard, "Bluemont Central College," 337.

The meaning behind Bluemont's design appears clearer when placed in the larger architectural context. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the origin and rise in popularity of two architectural styles, the Romanesque and Gothic Revivals. Despite their differences, both drew upon romantic notions of the Middle Ages.²⁷⁴ Previously viewed as "barbaric and unsophisticated," the Middle Ages assumed a more positive aura following the onset of industrialization in the Western world. Faced with large, overcrowded, and polluted cities, people grew nostalgic for a picturesque, pre-industrial past, seen as "more devout, community-centered, and with better craftsmanship than modern times."²⁷⁵ Though not developed solely for this purpose, the Gothic and Romanesque revival styles, with their air of dignity, solidity, power, and primitiveness, filled the demand for picturesque and romanticized architecture, breaking from the formal classical style that had dominated the previous three hundred years.²⁷⁶ For Bluemont founders Washington Marlatt, Isaac Goodnow, and Joseph Denison, all heavily involved in the Methodist-Episcopalian church, the Romanesque revival was particularly appealing, as Protestant sects saw it as more primitive than Gothic and thus closer to the (perceived) purer Christianity of the early medieval period.²⁷⁷

This use of Romanesque continued after the establishment of Kansas State, albeit with some changes. The school's two oldest buildings, Anderson (1879) and Holtz (1876) Halls, feature both Romanesque and Gothic style elements, a unique blend still visible on campus

²⁷⁴ For more information, see Michael Lewis, *The Gothic Revival* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), and Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

²⁷⁵ Melissa Mayhew, "Castles of K-State" (undergraduate research seminar, Kansas State University, 2015), 1, 6.

²⁷⁶ Emil C. Fischer, *Kansas State University: A Walk Through the Campus* (Manhattan, KS: The Kansas State University Endowment Association Inc., 1975), 6.

²⁷⁷ Mayhew, "Castles of K-State," 6.

today. Of greater interest, however, are Holton (1900), Fairchild (1894), Kedzie (original section, 1899), and Old Denison (1902–1934) Halls. Built in the Richardson Romanesque style, named after American architect Henry Hobson Richardson, they are the first of what Melissa Mayhew terms the “castles of K-State.”²⁷⁸ Drawn from the “rugged architecture of the tenth to the twelfth centuries in Southern France,” they feature an array of turrets, towers, and parapets, invoking the stereotypical image of the medieval fortress.²⁷⁹ While Memorial Stadium’s design drew from these four buildings, its direct aesthetic precedent was Nichols Gymnasium (later Hall), completed in 1911. Named in honor of the former head of the physics department and college president Ernest R. Nichols, the building, with its battlements, towers, and rugged stone walls, best embodies a medieval castle.²⁸⁰ Mirroring the strength and power evident in the building’s exterior, Nichols housed the departments of physical education and military science, a symbolic connection likely not lost on those discussing potential architectural styles for Memorial Stadium less than a decade later.

Contrary to athletics’ widespread and well-known presence today, formal physical education and organized sports were only in their infancy at the turn of the century. Although attention was given to physical exercises at Kansas State from its founding, organized athletics did not begin at Kansas State until 1883, when a faculty committee approved the formation of an Athletic Club.²⁸¹ By 1897 the college participated in intercollegiate athletics, and with the growth in popularity of sports among students, faculty, and the administration, the need for on-

²⁷⁸ Mayhew, “Castles of K-State,” 10.

²⁷⁹ Fischer, *A Walk Through Campus*, 6.

²⁸⁰ Fischer, 61.

²⁸¹ Julius T. Willard, *History of the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science* (Manhattan, KS: Kansas State College Press, 1940), 488–89 (hereafter cited as *History of Kansas State*).

campus athletic fields became apparent, as did the desire for a formal physical education department. The period 1909–1912 proved a significant turning point, as the college built its first on-site fields (located where the Alumni Center now stands) and joined the Missouri Valley Conference. The completion of Nichols Gymnasium, however, stood as the most important achievement. It “greatly enlarged the opportunity for physical training of all kinds,” offering, among other things, indoor practice space to the baseball team, two swimming pools, and a basketball court.²⁸²

Among organized sports at Kansas State, baseball and football stood as the most popular, though the focus here will be on football, given its connection to physical culture (discussed below) and the development of Memorial Stadium. Originating in British rugby, football grew in popularity in the last decades of the nineteenth century, with “The Big Three” of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton taking the lead in showing “the rest of the collegiate world how to organize and play the game.”²⁸³ The sport’s detractors, however, pointed to its uncontrolled brutality and questioned its presence in environments devoted to higher learning, arguing that football was “a violent and dangerous activity inappropriate for college students.”²⁸⁴ At Kansas State, faculty considered it a distraction to students, and Julius Willard points out that “Football had a prolonged and difficult struggle in winning acceptance at the College as an institutionalized sport.” Nonetheless, in February 1891, the school’s newspaper, the *Kansas Industrialist*, noted

²⁸² Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 491–96; Cliff Hight and Anthony R. Crawford, *Generations of Success: A Photographic History of Kansas State University, 1863–2013* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 2013), 63.

²⁸³ Michael Oriard, review of John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), *American Studies* 43 (Spring 2002), 192.

²⁸⁴ John S. Watterson III, “Political Football: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and the Gridiron Reform Movement,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25 (Summer 1995), 556.

that “two football teams were to be organized and that the game will be presented according to rule.”²⁸⁵ As John Watterson argues, however, it was the rules (or lack thereof) that led to a series of controversies about reforming football or abolishing it altogether. Thanks in part to football advocates such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the sport weathered the crises of the 1890s and 1900s, evolving into the “attractive game that Wilson had advocated and a far less brutal game than the unruly spectacle that Roosevelt had tried to control.”²⁸⁶ It is perhaps no coincidence that the end of the football crises corresponded with the arrival of Mike Ahearn, often called the “Father of Kansas State Athletics,” and the construction and completion of Nichols Gymnasium, both of which heralded a new athletic era for the college.²⁸⁷

Sports made up only half of Nichols, however. The other component was the department of military science, an appropriate inclusion given the building’s architectural style. Instruction in military science dated to the college’s founding, as education in that field was a requirement of all land-grant schools under the Morrill Act. Over the next two decades, college administrators made and lifted requirements for male students to take military training; during the 1870s, for example, there was no military tactics professor at Kansas State. This problem was rectified by 1881, with the military department taking up residence in the Armory (later Farm Machinery Hall, now Cardwell Hall). All military drill and training occurred in and near this building until the completion of Nichols in 1911.²⁸⁸ When opened, then, Nichols Gymnasium provided Kansas State with the necessary facilities for two departments of emerging importance. This decision, whether inadvertently or consciously, embodied the broader symbolic connection between sport

²⁸⁵ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 501.

²⁸⁶ Watterson, “Political Football,” 555.

²⁸⁷ Hight and Crawford, *Generations of Success*, 88.

²⁸⁸ Hight and Crawford, 27–28; Fischer, *A Walk Through Campus*, 88.

and the military that emerged in the wake of the Spanish-American War, one that fit with new understandings of manhood and contributed to the development of the modern American physical culture.

The Quest for Manhood

The various physical and institutional changes that Kansas State experienced in the decades prior to the First World War were small compared to those in the country at large. The industrialization that contributed to the architectural styles of KSAC's earliest buildings propelled the country forward, causing it to change more rapidly than at any other time in its history. As Meirion and Susie Harries argue, "People were trying to come to terms with the massive industrial development that had followed the Civil War—the vast immigration it sparked, the growth of cities, the closing of the frontier, the new technologies and their impact on daily life and work." Invariably, tensions emerged, creating "a society in flux."²⁸⁹ The tension, or "crisis," as some historians have termed it, helped breed white, middle-class men's concern (some might say obsession) with manhood. Their collective reinvention of what defined a "real" man altered American society and culture and directly influenced the aesthetic design and symbolic language of Memorial Stadium.

In the decades following the Civil War, the definition of manhood, as understood by white, middle-class men, underwent extensive change. The emergence of corporate America, featuring the shift from the individual male struggling for upward mobility to the new "corporate man," meant that "economic independence and ownership could no longer be central to

²⁸⁹ Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence*, 7. For more on American society before 1914, see Harries, 13–25.

manhood,” thus undermining a central tenet of Victorian manhood.²⁹⁰ In the political and social realm, men faced challenges from working-class men and middle-class women, both affecting men’s sense of identity and authority. Health officials also announced the discovery of a new disease, neurasthenia, caused by the excessive mental strain endured by the above-mentioned corporate man. This led many middle-class men to fear their bodies had become weak, unable to compete physically with the vitality of working-class men.²⁹¹ Such concerns, even fears, lacked a formal label until the late 1960s, when historians, immersed in their own dramatic societal shift, termed it a “crisis of masculinity.” Beginning in the early 1990s, however, this term came under attack, with scholars pointing to its limited value in understanding gender and gender constructs.²⁹² Middle-class men may, as Clifford Putney points out, have been “convinced that the archetypal Victorian gentleman was ill-equipped to handle the challenges posed by modernity,” but they nonetheless remained convinced of male superiority, both in terms of gender and race.²⁹³

To combat the onslaught of societal change, middle-class men proposed “a new model for manhood, one that stressed action rather than reflection and aggression rather than

²⁹⁰ Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870–1930* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 45–51.

²⁹¹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 14–15.

²⁹² Bret E. Carroll, ed., *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia* (New York: The Moschovitis Group, Inc., 2003), 117–18. The entry “Crisis of Masculinity” provides a concise summation of the historiography behind the term, and subsequent citations utilize this new scholarship in the field of gender studies.

²⁹³ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 5. Although too extensive a subject to take up here, Putney, Bederman, and the other historians cited in this section all discuss the intertwined nature of race, gender, and manhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with U.S. involvement in the Spanish-American War linking imperialism and empire to this.

gentility.”²⁹⁴ This resulted in the emergence of various social institutions and leisure activities designed to encourage “primitive” masculine behavior in middle-class men and boys, what historian E. Anthony Rotundo has termed “passionate manhood.” Men increasingly paid greater attention to the male body while working to cultivate a muscular physique, thus treating physical strength and strength of character as the same thing.²⁹⁵ In seeking to revitalize masculinity through the recovery of a rugged masculine self, men focused on boxing and other athletics, outdoor activities such as hunting, and strenuous activity in general.²⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, this shift also brought about an entirely new vocabulary, particularly with regard to the word “masculine.” Gail Bederman states that although most people (historians and the average person alike) tend to use “manly” and “masculine” interchangeably, the words had very distinct definitions at the time. Prior to 1890, “manly” or “manliness” referred to moral qualities possessed by the ideal Victorian man, whereas “masculine” described differences between men and women, such as “masculine clothing.” Increasingly, however, “masculine” and “masculinity” were favored, as they “could convey the new attributes of powerful manhood which middle-class men were working to synthesize.”²⁹⁷

The promotion of organized sports such as baseball, football, basketball, and volleyball was a crucial component of the new manhood. Whereas antebellum Americans, though willing to accept health reformers’ ideas about calisthenics, “saw no obvious merit in sport—certainly no

²⁹⁴ Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 5.

²⁹⁵ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 223. See Rotundo’s book for more details on the characteristics of passionate manhood.

²⁹⁶ Carroll, *American Masculinities*, 353.

²⁹⁷ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 17–19. Bederman cites the *Century Dictionary* as evidence for the change terminology and meaning.

clear social value to it and no sense that it contributed to the improvement of the individual's character or the society's moral or even physical health," by 1890 this perception shifted, in part "amid an increasing cultural emphasis on the physical aspects of manhood."²⁹⁸ In this changing cultural environment, sport existed as a strategy of regeneration and renewal; where once regeneration of the body centered on restful leisure, it now emphasized organized activity. Donald Mrozek argues that it is this regenerative and renewal element that gave the "strenuous life," as it became known, its appeal, and not simply its "egotistical triumph over demanding conditions."²⁹⁹

For Protestant clergy, this physical renewal was also linked to spiritual regeneration, as articulated in the religious philosophy known as muscular Christianity. Defined as a Christian commitment to health and manliness, the movement celebrated bodies and "expressed faith in the power of strenuous activity to overcome the perceived moral defects of urbanization, cultural pluralism, and white-collar work."³⁰⁰ Protestant churches combined this with the reinvention of Jesus; abandoning the feminized Victorian image, they portrayed Jesus as "a muscular carpenter with black hair and a stoic heavenward gaze," creating a new ideal representation of white, middle-class, male spirituality. To help spread their message, advocates relied on institutions such as the Boy Scouts of America (founded 1910) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA, an English organization first founded in the United States in 1851). Both organizations encouraged sport in their efforts to promote a model of manliness based on physical fitness and

²⁹⁸ Donald J. Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880–1910* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983), xiii.

²⁹⁹ Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality*, 3–12. The first two chapters of Mrozek's study are particularly useful and provide greater context and information than is possible to go into here.

³⁰⁰ Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 11, 44.

Christian morality. Thus, athletics and outdoor recreation, once viewed as a “diversion” to religious pursuits and an obstacle to moral attainment, were now seen as beneficial.³⁰¹

Although many championed the new definitions of manhood as it pertained to athletics and outdoor activities, arguably no American promoted or embodied it more than Theodore Roosevelt. Despite suffering from ill health as a child and wearing spectacles due to nearsightedness, the privileged New Yorker created a new image of masculinity that combined education, physical strength, and rugged individualism. Accused of effeminacy early in his political career, Roosevelt traveled west to the Dakotas, reconstructing himself into a “robust cowboy.” His later organization of the Rough Riders, a regiment of volunteers composed of Ivy Leaguers and cowboys, during the Spanish-American War demonstrated Roosevelt’s belief in the importance of education and outdoorsmanship to masculine living and led to him being known as a staunch advocate of a virile nationalism and imperialism. His leadership of the Rough Riders, combined with his charismatic personality and virile masculinity, catapulted TR to national fame and the vice-presidency in 1900.³⁰² Roosevelt best articulated his beliefs on American manhood in an April 1899 speech at Chicago’s elite Hamilton Club, introducing a phrase that predated TR but attributed to him since that day: the “strenuous life.” He exhorted his all-male audience that asserting the white man’s racial power abroad was necessary to avoid losing the masculine strength Americans had already established through race war (with Native Americans) on the frontier, thus becoming “a walking advertisement for the imperialistic manhood he desired for the American race.”³⁰³

³⁰¹ Carroll, *American Masculinities*, 323; Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 72.

³⁰² Carroll, *American Masculinities*, 402–03, 433–34.

³⁰³ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 186, 190. For more on Roosevelt and masculine imperialism, see Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 170–215.

Directly linked to this positive view of imperialism was the active pursuit of physical and (if possible) military exertion. It is no coincidence that TR's Rough Riders consisted of not just any Ivy Leaguers, but specifically athletes from universities such as Harvard and Yale, two schools known for their early prowess at football. It was Yale graduate Walter Camp that acted as "The most influential figure in college football from the early 1880s until 1910," serving as an ad hoc coach for the Yale team and secretary of the influential football rules committee, ultimately bringing about the transformation of American football from its British rugby ancestor.³⁰⁴ Placed in the context of the emerging new masculinity, football appealed to young men because it wed older definitions of manliness that rested upon notions of physical strength, exertion, and endurance with new ideas concerning masculinity fostered by the corporate economy, such as mental acuity, leadership skills, and teamwork.³⁰⁵ It is thus not surprising that Roosevelt fiercely defended the sport when it came under attack from men such as educational reformer Charles Eliot, who argued that football dulled the instincts and converted young men into "powerful animals."³⁰⁶

The same attributes that made football appealing to college-age men and statesmen such as Roosevelt also endeared the sport to the military. Beginning with the Spanish-American War, the military used sports, particularly football but also baseball, to "provide a metaphorical explanation for issues which had no intrinsic relation to physical training and to connect the incidents of combat to events in civilian life."³⁰⁷ Sport was an intricate part of training at West

³⁰⁴ Watterson III, "Political Football," 556.

³⁰⁵ Carroll, *American Masculinities*, 174.

³⁰⁶ Watterson, "Political Football," 557.

³⁰⁷ Wanda Ellen Wakefield, *Playing to Win: Sports and the American Military, 1898–1945* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 16.

Point and Annapolis; viewed as a means of promoting military preparedness, officials argued that “the character and attitude of the recruit would have been altered by sport and exercise so that he would then be a more suitable candidate for true soldiering.”³⁰⁸ Contrary to the oft-used language connecting sport and war (think here of phrases such as “playing the game” utilized by British and American participants of all levels in World War I), Roosevelt and men like him “did not carelessly assume that the practical efforts of pursuing sport could substitute for the expedient preparation for any other activity,” such as war. Athletics could (and Roosevelt believed they did) instill certain martial qualities in potential soldiers, but formal military training remained necessary.³⁰⁹ This did not prevent the continued use of metaphors connecting sport and war, however, as the rhetoric used in the years leading up to and following America’s entry into the First World War illustrate. Sport, along with the new ideals of manhood discussed above, was actively invoked by politicians and military leaders alike in their efforts to recruit soldiers and create widespread support for military service, and for war in general.³¹⁰ These same ideals were soon being invoked for another reason: the creation of a stadium as a fitting memorial to the forty-eight former “Aggies” of Kansas State.

The Aggies Go to War

When Europe went to war in August 1914, K-State students, like most Americans, did not envision direct involvement in the conflict. Dr. Julius Willard, then dean of the division of general science, later reflected on students’ “indifference to the issues involved” and their continuation of “social activities as usual.”³¹¹ An examination of the *Kansas Industrialist* reflects

³⁰⁸ Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality*, 51–53.

³⁰⁹ Mrozek, 35.

³¹⁰ Carroll, *American Masculinities*, 117–18, 323, 505.

³¹¹ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 304.

this indifference, with little coverage devoted to the war in Europe. President Woodrow Wilson's war address to Congress on April 2, 1917, and Congress's subsequent declaration of war four days later, however, initiated an abrupt change in attitude. At a "patriotic mass meeting" of students and citizens in the college auditorium on April 11, board administrator and former governor of Kansas E. W. Hoch stated "That regardless of country of birth every man and woman in America should put aside differences of opinion and unite in a common cause... There is no longer a place for difference. Every American citizen should help 'lick' Germany."³¹²

Then dean of the division of agriculture Dr. William M. Jardine echoed this patriotism regarding food production, arguing that "If our armies are to succeed we must back up the patriotism of the soldier by the patriotism of increased production." Jardine was not alone in this opinion. An editorial entitled "Kansas and Preparedness" wrote how the nation would look to Kansas for food, given the state's long history as a leader of agriculture, and that "Kansas will not disappoint the nation's expectations.... Everyone in the state will use food and food production economically for the greater good of the nation. In these ways Kansas will do its special part toward the security and success of the United States in the great war."³¹³ This message was adopted by Kansas State alumni, who in late May urged college faculty to "impress upon the student body the urgency of action" and for the students in turn to "carry the message home to the farm and be inspired to do their full share in stimulating the production and conservation of human food."³¹⁴ Although the United States never experienced an actual food

³¹² "For Glory of Country," *Kansas Industrialist*, April 11, 1917. Unless otherwise noted, all *Kansas Industrialist* and *Kansas State Collegian* materials were derived from the Internet Archive database.

³¹³ "More Food is Needed" and "Kansas and Preparedness," *Kansas Industrialist*, April 11, 1917.

³¹⁴ "Eastern Alumni Active," *Kansas Industrialist*, May 23, 1917.

crisis during the war, the issue of food and food production remained a consistent topic of conversation at the college until after the armistice.

U.S. entry into World War I also brought changes to the greater Manhattan-Fort Riley-Junction City community. In his 1977 study on the college, longtime professor of history and university historian James Carey wrote that “The relaxed, carefree, and even frivolous pre-war campus life changed with America’s entry into World War I..It was a long way to Tipperary, but only a short distance to suddenly awakened Fort Riley.”³¹⁵ That military reservation’s swift burst to life stemmed from the War Department’s authorization to build Camp Funston, in time the largest of sixteen divisional cantonment training camps for training soldiers for military duty. It is estimated that up to 4,000 buildings were constructed, designed to accommodate more than 40,000 soldiers, making the camp resemble a city.³¹⁶ Simultaneously, Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (R.O.T.C.) and Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.) units were established at Kansas State, leading the Board of Administrators to conclude: “We practically turned over our educational institutions to the government and converted them into great training camps.”³¹⁷

The thousands of soon-to-be soldiers, including 1223 current and former K-State Aggies, were not only instructed in basic military tactics but also infused with notions of masculinity and morality through participation in sports. As discussed above, the military had used sports as a metaphor for war since the Spanish-American War, with more recent British and Canadian experiences on the Western Front proving that athletics helped promote and maintain military efficiency and morale.³¹⁸ Despite the presence of other sports such as boxing and baseball,

³¹⁵ Carey, *Kansas State University*, 125.

³¹⁶ “Camp Funston,” Kansas Historical Society, <http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/camp-funston/16692>.

³¹⁷ Carey, *Kansas State University*, 126.

³¹⁸ Wakefield, *Playing to Win*, 13-16.

football remained the most popular. Camp Funston formed the Funston Fighters, consisting of men from the 89th Division, who retained a perfect record until defeated by the University of Illinois 28 to 0 on Thanksgiving Day, a “bitter dose” for the coach, players, and estimated 20,000 enlisted men and officers who cheered them on.³¹⁹

The college was proud of its commitment to the war. Albert Dickens, president of KSAC’s alumni association, wrote admiringly that “Kansas State Agricultural college graduates and former students have heard the call and are ‘on the job’” and then listed the names of alumni and their wartime occupations.³²⁰ The college’s yearbook, *Royal Purple*, also honored the men in uniform, including special dedication and “Hall of Honor” pages in the volumes during and immediately following the war years. Because of his selection as AEF commander John Pershing’s chief of staff, Major James G. Harbord (class of 1886) became Kansas State’s most distinguished alumnus, with the *Industrialist* writing that Harbord “is a notable example of the army officer who has risen from the ranks.”³²¹ Promoted to brigadier general, he received command of the Fourth Marine Brigade, Second Division in June 1918, and led them during the battles of Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood. In the years after the war, the college honored General Harbord twice; first, by awarding him an honorary degree of Doctor of Law at a special convocation in 1920, and second, having him dedicate a memorial flagpole in November 1921

³¹⁹ “Thanksgiving Football Game, 1917,” Kansas Historical Society, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/thanksgiving-day-football-game-1917/19063>. Mrozek’s *Sport and American Mentality* contains a photograph of men boxing at Fort Riley on page 55.

³²⁰ “A Message to the Alumni,” *Kansas Industrialist*, July 18, 1917.

³²¹ “Major Harbord’s Record,” *Kansas Industrialist*, July 18, 1917.

(destroyed prior to the construction of McCain Auditorium), presented to the college by the class of 1920.³²²

At the end of the 1918–1919 academic year, the *Royal Purple* recognized the wartime service of its students and alumni in a special foreword by President William M. Jardine. Addressing the young men (not eligible for military service) and women who “‘carried on’ in spite of continued interruptions and unprecedented conditions,” Jardine wrote that they “demonstrated their persistent serious purpose, and their unquestionable fitness to survive.” The focal point, however, was on “those Kansas State Agricultural College men who gave their lives on the battlefield.” He stated that “Volume XI of the *Royal Purple* stands at the time as a monument to all Kansas Aggie spirit and devotion....Not a few [forty-eight in total] were called upon to give the last full measure of devotion, and their names are forever written on our hearts.”³²³ Coupled with his letter to the faculty one month earlier (discussed below), Jardine’s foreword in the *Royal Purple* helped initiate Kansas State’s plan to commemorate the very Aggies of whom he spoke, a plan that ultimately fit both their practical needs and personal sentiments.

“A Worthy Memorial to Our Soldier Dead”

Unlike in Kansas City and Washington, where civic leaders took up the issue of memorialization before the close of 1918, Kansas State did not begin its discussions until the spring of 1919. This placed the college behind its intrastate rival, the University of Kansas (KU)

³²² *Royal Purple*, 1922. Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University, 1891–. Published annually, 349. There are several photos of the memorial flagpole dedication on page 399. Unless otherwise noted, all issues of the *Royal Purple* utilized in this chapter were derived from the Internet Archive database. Original copies are held in the Morse Department of Special Collections, Kansas State University Libraries, Manhattan, KS.

³²³ *Royal Purple*, 1919, foreword.

in Lawrence, which, according to the *Kansas State Collegian*, began preparing an honor roll of the dead in January 1919.³²⁴ The university followed with a memorial stadium (opened 1921, expanded in 1925 and 1927) and memorial student union (opened 1926). While there is no clear evidence to suggest that KU's efforts spurred Kansas State to act on the subject, it seems at least plausible given the strong rivalry between the two schools. Nonetheless, several months passed before the college wrote or spoke of potential memorials.

Although the college community later rallied enthusiastically around the concept of a memorial stadium, it was not at the forefront of peoples' minds in the spring of 1919. In March, students in the horticultural department opined that "Young trees...are much more fitting memorials than service stars."³²⁵ This sentiment echoes early efforts in the District of Columbia, as well as numerous towns and counties across the country (including Kansas communities), and reflects the belief, held by many Americans, in living memorials as the most fitting for those lost.³²⁶ One month later, President Jardine composed a letter to a selection of faculty, asking them to "accept membership on a committee to consider the matter of what action if any, we, as a faculty or as an institution, should take towards erecting on the campus of the college a suitable Memorial to the soldiers who have fallen in battle and who were at one time students at this institution." Notably absent is a direct reference to the First World War. In his history on KSAC, Dean Willard specifically points out that Jardine's letter was purposely broad, as "the general

³²⁴ "A K. U. Memorial," *Kansas State Collegian*, January 21, 1919.

³²⁵ "Plant Trees as Memorial to Soldiers," *Kansas State Collegian*, March 25, 1919. It is unclear what service stars they refer to here.

³²⁶ An editorial entitled "Trees for the Soldiers" in the April 2, 1919 *Industrialist* speaks directly to the widespread support of planting trees in memory of soldiers and sailors who fought in the war.

discussion favored including those [victims] of other wars.”³²⁷ Like the horticultural division, Jardine’s faculty committee favored a living memorial, in this case, “a union building for student use” like that ultimately built at the University of Kansas. The college’s senior class also supported a living memorial, going on record in May “as favoring a hall as a suitable memorial for the dead and living who served,” again, with no specific reference to World War I.³²⁸ Why Kansas State did not propose a World War I-specific memorial during this period is unknown, but it set the college apart from what occurred in Kansas City and Washington, D.C.

Like the District, however, Kansas State experienced a delay between the initial expression of ideas and the ultimate acceptance and development of Memorial Stadium. The memorial hall concept gained momentum in the months immediately following Jardine’s letter, with the KSAC Alumni Association drawing up plans to “commemorate former students and professors who served in [the] three wars since [the] college was founded.” Recently graduated architecture student Myron Johnson created sketches of the proposed building, which were then exhibited and “aroused much favorable comment among the alumni and other visitors.” Fundraising began immediately, with the *Industrialist* reporting that Miss Edith Worden, class of 1906, made the first pledge, with over thirty following her. These included members of the recently graduated class of 1919, who voted to “give the money in their treasury, amounting to some hundreds of dollars, for furnishing a room in the building.”³²⁹ In the months that followed, however, discussion of the proposed memorial hall tapered off, with only a couple mentions in the *Industrialist* in late fall 1919 and early 1920. In his history on the college, Dean Willard

³²⁷ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 413–14.

³²⁸ “Seniors Lead Movement,” *Kansas State Collegian*, May 30, 1919.

³²⁹ “Tribute to Aggie Men,” *Kansas Industrialist*, June 25, 1919.

suggests the memorial's tentative price tag caused the project to languish; he writes that a "suitable building" was estimated to cost upward of a quarter million dollars, a hefty sum at any time, but particularly when the country was entering a postwar recession.³³⁰ Regardless of the reason, talk of a memorial at Kansas State largely disappeared until 1921.

College officials and alumni did, however, reinitiate talk of a new stadium. In the wake of a 14 to 0 loss to rival KU, Clif Stratton (class of 1911) wrote that "Something will have to be done about a greater seating capacity for Ahearn Field. A movement was started 10 years ago for a stadium...The movement was dropped when the originators were graduated." He goes on to describe how "The comparatively few alumni who were here for the K.U. game...generally were out of luck for good seats at the game.... The agricultural college simply isn't in shape to handle decently a crowd of more than 2,500 persons."³³¹ We cannot know why there was a sudden renewed interest in a new stadium, but a likely source is the opponent of Kansas State's football team that day. Even as the 1920 football season progressed, KU began construction on their Memorial Stadium, a fact not likely lost on their Manhattan rivals. Taken together with KSAC's loss, alumni may have thought the time had come for the Aggies to have a new stadium of their own. Any doubt as to the alumni's seriousness on the issue dissipated quickly, as groups of alumni "threatened to start a campaign for a stadium."³³² Charles D. Thomas, class of 1917, went so far as to state that "The new stadium is more important than a flagpole for the drill grounds."

³³⁰ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 414.

³³¹ "Looking Around," *Kansas Industrialist*, November 3, 1920.

³³² "Quality at Homecoming," *Kansas Industrialist*, November 17, 1920.

The campaign, he argued, should be launched immediately; “K.S.A.C. needs it. It has been started before but not finished.”³³³

The separate conversations regarding a new stadium and a memorial hall came together in the fall of 1921. Speaking of the proposed projects, KSAC alum and associate professor in dairying at Purdue University L. H. Fairchild wrote, “The recent issues of the *Industrialist* have been full of particularly interesting news and the campaign for alumni members seems to be going over in fine shape. By another year, you ought to be able to formulate plans for a union building or a first-class stadium.”³³⁴ While some may have held out hope that both projects might yet be fulfilled, the dedication of the University of Kansas’s Memorial Stadium one week later, a day that witnessed the Jayhawks handily defeat the Aggies 21 to 7, appears to have spurred Kansas State from talk into action. Not only had “Considerable publicity been given to our need for a stadium,” but “Other institutions were erecting memorials, and, three years after the signing of the armistice, Kansas State was lagging.” On December 15, President Jardine once again called for a memorial committee, this time with the express purpose of erecting a memorial “to our graduates and students who gave their lives in the World War.” After some general discussion, the committee recommended a stadium “as the most suitable memorial to the untimely dead.”³³⁵

Even considering the conversations regarding the need for a new stadium, it is not surprising that Kansas State came to this conclusion. The period’s new conceptions of masculinity, discussed above, drew strong connections between the physicality of sport and the

³³³ “Another Stadium Pledge,” *Kansas Industrialist*, December 1, 1920. The flagpole mentioned is the same one dedicated by General Harbord.

³³⁴ “Fairchild Sees a Stadium,” *Kansas Industrialist*, October 26, 1921.

³³⁵ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 414–15.

physicality of war, while also emphasizing the overall intellectual and character-building benefits of sports. In his article on college memorial stadiums, Ivan Maisel points out that this language was used in the 1923 groundbreaking ceremony for the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium, when a Board of Regents member passionately stated that "As you struggle in this arena, as you charge across this field, we want you to have a vision of our boys in their more desperate charge in the Argonne Forest, and victory will surely be yours."³³⁶ Thus, just as American doughboys achieved victory in France, so too would athletes achieve victory on the field.³³⁷ In presenting his opinions for the memorial committee, Dean Willard utilized similar language, while also drawing upon previously discussed arguments for the moral and physical value in sports:

It is Appropriate—These men fell in war; in heroic physical contest. It is fitting that a splendid facility for physical development...should be erected as a memorial to men who were physically fit and who died in a contest where physical heroism was the ultimate basis upon which a victorious result was attained.

Athletic Sports Offer a Real Moral Safeguard to Young Men—The full-blooded, healthy young man has an excess of animal spirits that seek outlet and impel him to action. If facilities for innocent, healthful out-of-doors activity are not afforded he is much more likely to yield to the temptations of immorality and vice.

Our War Heroes Themselves Would Probably Favor a Stadium as a Memorial—They were young and full of vigor, many of them athletes, and all were persons by whom physical excellence would be held in high regard. While their voices are stilled forever, it is reasonable to believe that if they could have chosen a monument before they left they would have voted for the Stadium.³³⁸

³³⁶ Ivan Maisel, "Living Memorials For Those Who Served," http://www.espn.com/college-football/columns/story?columnist=maisel_ivan&id=4643874.

³³⁷ Donald Mrozek explores this link between military victory and athletic victory in *Sport and American Mentality*, 41–46.

³³⁸ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 415–16.

Like the planting of trees or the construction of student unions, a stadium also represented a living memorial, existing as a means of remembering the dead but serving the living. As noted above, advocates of living memorials stressed this point, arguing that structures such as fountains, bridges, and buildings satisfied both the desire to mourn as well as a community's practical needs far better than the erection of purely aesthetic and non-functional memorials.³³⁹ For Kansas State, and many other colleges, the creation of a memorial stadium did just that; it fulfilled a practical goal while providing the college with a means to commemorate those Aggies lost in the war. Willard's comments are again useful in illustrating the athletic diversity of the planned stadium:

It will be Useful—The Memorial Stadium will furnish much space for indoor sports, such as wrestling, handball, track athletics, as well as seats for viewing outdoor sports and games, pageants, May Fetes, etc. It will also contain dressing rooms, lockers, and resting rooms for teams and thus set free for other purposes space now used for these in Nichols Gymnasium.³⁴⁰

Surprisingly, this blend of practicality and remembrance bears some similarity to what occurred in Kansas City, though the latter might not have seen it that way. As Chapter 1 demonstrated, Kansas City's memorial came about due to a combination of the need to mourn and the desire (by civic leaders) to promote the city. The Liberty Memorial Association may have selected a traditional and non-functional design for their memorial, but it nonetheless served a practical purpose in that (once completed) it stood as an aesthetic complement to Union Station, placing a resounding exclamation point on the City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City.

³³⁹ Countless bulletins and pamphlets address this, particularly materials found in the World War I Memorials folder, NARA, cited in Chapter 2.

³⁴⁰ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 415–16.

“Aggie Stadium Certain”

Following the committee’s vote and President Jardine’s endorsement to erect a memorial stadium, a Manhattan committee was organized to work in tandem with the college regarding the solicitation of funds. Interest in the project already existed among Manhattan citizens, with the *Collegian* reporting in late December that “It is not believed that a formal drive will be undertaken at this time, but a number of alumni and business men of Manhattan have pledged enough money to make the supporters of the movement confident that at least a section of the stadium can be built before next fall.”³⁴¹ The *Industrialist* echoed this, asserting that “enough money has been voluntarily pledged by Manhattan business men and alumni to make a good sized beginning this year without calling for support from anybody who does not voluntarily offer to contribute to a fund. Availing itself of this voluntary support, the committee is expected to work out a program by which such funds may be employed for the erection of at least one section of the stadium this school year.”³⁴²

Given that the college did not host a general meeting of students and faculty for obtaining monetary subscriptions until April, Kansas State was quite fortunate that a group of Manhattanites stood ready to contribute immediately in January. It is unlikely that construction of the stadium’s west wing would have progressed as scheduled without the initial “start-up” donations from community leaders and businessmen. The college had a legitimate reason for the delay, however, one that President Jardine addressed. After thanking the “friends of the college...ready to give enough during 1922 to complete the first section,” he stated that “In view of the general economic depression we could not think of calling upon our alumni for the full

³⁴¹ Committee on Stadium Meets,” *Kansas State Collegian*, December 20, 1921.

³⁴² “Section of Stadium This Year Now Hope,” *Kansas Industrialist*, December 21, 1921.

[estimated stadium's cost of] \$200,000 within the next year.... But the worst of the depression is past, we hope. The year 1922 is expected to bring with it better business conditions generally. Within two or three years our alumni and other friends of K.S.A.C. will be in a position to contribute their share toward completion of the memorial stadium."³⁴³

Accompanying Jardine's announcement was a detailed description of the stadium's proposed aesthetic, architectural, and practical features as proposed by the committee. In speaking of the structure's aesthetic appearance, the writer drew upon Willard's point (made before the committee) that "It will be a Structure of Beauty and Dignity—Its towers and walls built of beautiful native limestone will make it not merely tiers of seats, but a real building of quiet strength, harmonizing with the other buildings of the city on the hill."³⁴⁴ It would specifically "harmonize" with Nichols Gymnasium, a not unexpected decision, given that Nichols not only housed physical education and military science, but physically and symbolically reflected strength and power. The proposed stadium "will be built on the site of the present athletic field and when complete will form a proportionally small section of a great circle, instead of the conventional U-shaped." Total capacity when completed equaled 20,000, with the space underneath the seats "utilized for locker rooms, showers, recreation centers, and club rooms for the old grads."³⁴⁵

People expressed their support for the planned stadium in different ways. Some clamored for immediate action in the wake of the above articles, as an alumnus suggested in the January 25 *Industrialist*, "Some definitive stadium plans will be announced soon, if the enthusiasts can

³⁴³ "Aggie Stadium Certain," *Kansas Industrialist*, January 11, 1922.

³⁴⁴ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 415.

³⁴⁵ "Complete Stadium Section for Fall," *Kansas State Collegian*, January 6, 1922.

restrain their ardor long enough to allow the plans to be made.”³⁴⁶ Others, like veteran Edwin L. Holton, made a more emotional plea in favor of the stadium. Believing, after visiting the grave of fellow Aggie Eddie (Edward) Wells in October 1918, that “K.S.A.C. will build a worthy memorial to her boys who made the supreme sacrifice,” Holton both questioned the college’s delay and expressed his conviction “that the most fitting memorial we could erect for them is a great stadium.” Interestingly, he focused not on the stadium as representative of the new masculinity or symbolic of the oft-touted link between sport and the military but on the Wilsonian ideals that sent America to war in 1917: “It is in the stadium that we forget our differences and learn to cooperate. It is one of the institutions in which America is solving the problem of how to make democracy safe. It is one of America’s great socializing institutions. It is an institution in which the common experiences, the common hopes, and the common ideals of our great American democracy are created and kept alive.”³⁴⁷

One cannot help but be struck by Holton’s words. His language was like that employed in support of Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial, but with emphasis on the ideals, rather than wartime sacrifices, of the United States. That he was a veteran, speaking these words in 1921, is also worth noting. For Holton, the passionate idealism of 1917 had yet to dissipate, despite his experiences on the Western Front and the realities of the postwar world. Perhaps he did not suffer economic or social hardships upon his return from France, as many veterans did, something to be explored below. Or perhaps the rhetoric of 1917 resonated so strongly with Holton, as it did for many Americans, that it remained a source of hope, a means of coping with the war and its complexities. Regardless, his words stand as testament to the lasting power and

³⁴⁶ “Looking Around,” *Kansas Industrialist*, January 25, 1922.

³⁴⁷ “Lest We Forget,” *Kansas State Collegian*, January 10, 1922.

influence of Wilson's ideals in the minds of some Americans, greatly affecting the young men called upon to defend them.

“Let's Make It Unanimous”

On March 31, 1922, the *Collegian* announced with great fanfare that the “Stadium Drive Begins on April 24.” The decision to “start the crusade for funds” was made two days earlier, with committee chairman Professor H. H. King expressing confidence that “enough money would be pledged this spring to let the contract for the first section June 1.” If \$125,000 (the goal of the fundraising drive) were achieved, it would allow “the first section ready for use next fall, not later than the Homecoming game with the University of Kansas, October 28,” certainly not coincidence, given KU's dedication of their own memorial stadium in the game against Kansas State the previous fall.³⁴⁸ Division of engineering dean R. A. Seaton, in charge of the engineering plans for the new stadium, explained the proposed structural details with the help of an architectural drawing to the memorial committee. As reported in the *Industrialist* several days later

The entire stadium will be faced with a wall of native limestone, 40 feet high, with six towers, two 58 feet high and the other four 48 feet high. The stadium will be horseshoe shaped with the open end to the north. All sections will be on curves, and the seating plane will be slightly concave, so that every seat of the 12,000 will be desirable and will afford a full view of every play of the game. The length overall from north to south will be 600 feet.... The main entrance at the south will be 16 feet wide, surmounted by two towers each 58 feet high.... The main entrance will be 75 feet north of Anderson avenue, and the west section will be set back 60 feet from the west fence of the campus, providing parking space for a large number of cars.

³⁴⁸ “Make Final Plans to Open Campaign,” *Kansas State Collegian*, March 31, 1922.

There followed an extensive account of seating dimensions, section entrances, and the interior arrangement, with the writer concluding that “Members of the stadium committee and of the Manhattan chamber of commerce committee are much pleased with the plans for the stadium.”³⁴⁹

Over the next couple weeks, a variety of ads and editorials appeared in the *Collegian* in support of the proposed stadium. Dr. E. D. Mitchell, a chiropractor with an office on Moro Street in Aggieville, pledged that “one-half of all money received from K.S.A.C. students’ adjustments [in the next 30 days] will be given to the Stadium fund.”³⁵⁰ An editorial on April 11 enthused that “Alumni from all over the country have sent in words of approval. School loyalty and patriotism which may have slumbered in their breasts for many years has [sic] begun to surge again. Those men who started the movement [for a new stadium] back in ’09 now see that their efforts were justified.... We may build only one section at this time but if we build it well and at the same time make provisions for the future development in the years which follow, our efforts will have been worthwhile.”³⁵¹ Under a printed sketch of the stadium, the first appearance in print for the public to view, the newspaper stated that “The Memorial stadium campaign is gathering momentum in Manhattan. Civic organizations are getting behind the campaign. Mike Ahern [sic], physical director, appeared before the Cooperative, Rotary, Kiwanis clubs this week, and these organizations and their members are backing the stadium to the limit.”³⁵²

The *Collegian* also reminded its readers that “In 1918 American soldiers, alongside those of the Allies, stood victors over the bloody fields of France. Among these men were many from K.S.A.C.... beneath the sod of France were 45 [actually 48] men.” Comparing the victory of the

³⁴⁹ “Stadium Drive Begins,” *Kansas Industrialist*, April 5, 1922.

³⁵⁰ “For the Stadium,” *Kansas State Collegian*, April 7 and 14, 1922.

³⁵¹ “We Should Build for the Future,” *Kansas State Collegian*, April 11, 1922.

³⁵² “Get Ready for Stadium Drive,” *Kansas State Collegian*, April 14, 1922.

Allies to that of Julius Caesar and his legions, the writer states that just as “the Roman populace show[ed] its great appreciation for deeds of heroism, so too would the college “keep in mind the K.S.A.C. men who wore the uniform” through the building of a stadium.³⁵³ President Jardine expressed similar sentiments, stating that he favored a memorial stadium because “I know of no more fitting memorial to our graduates and former students who perished in the World War than the memorial stadium that is planned. It will be a true memorial and it will be such a memorial as these boys themselves would approve heartily.” Jardine’s use of the phrase “true memorial” is interesting here, as it implies the superiority of living memorials over more traditional ones. He also echoes Dean Willard’s comments in invoking the supposed opinions of the dead soldiers, a tactic employed in both Kansas City and D.C. as well; thus, the dead soldiers become unwilling and unknowing “tools” (for lack of a better word) in the drive for memorialization.

Lest anyone doubt the multifaceted justification for the stadium, however, Jardine explicitly points to the academic benefits of a new stadium, stating that “The young men and women whom we want to attract to the college believe in athletics. If we are to get our share of available material, if we are to keep our standing in the Missouri Valley we can be content no longer with furnishing the shabbiest athletic accommodations in the valley.”³⁵⁴ It is perhaps telling that the president’s comments on the stadium’s benefit to the college precede his comments on the men whom the structure would commemorate. There is also a striking similarity between Jardine’s words and Liberty Memorial Association president Robert Long, as both men claimed the new memorials would not only attract people to their city or college but

³⁵³ “An Appreciation of Service,” *Kansas State Collegian*, April 18, 1922.

³⁵⁴ “Now for the Stadium,” *Kansas Industrialist*, April 12, 1922.

would also improve the overall reputation and appearance of the two locales. Thus, one sees the diverse nature and reasoning behind memorialization efforts.

Days before the official opening of the fundraising drive, the memorial stadium committee made a final announcement to the college community. Using language like that in Kansas City and Washington, D.C., the committee called upon “Every student, every member of the faculty, every citizen of Manhattan” to “contribute as liberally as his means allow, toward the memorial fund.” Despite maintaining the importance of remaining within one’s one budget, perhaps in recognition of the lingering effects of the 1920 recession, the committee nonetheless argued that “A \$350,000 memorial to the Aggies who gave all in the World War will not entail a heavy sacrifice on any student, if every student gives his share,” a subtle employment of the dead as motivation for the living to donate while exerting a “guilty conscience” form of peer pressure. The committee, repeating the sentiments of President Jardine, also pointed out that “The new stadium is a necessity if the Kansas State Agricultural college is to hold a place in the front rank among Missouri Valley teams.”³⁵⁵ Having established the necessity of a new stadium for several months, with a stronger emphasis on the practical versus the commemorative need for such a structure, Kansas State was now poised to join numerous universities across the country in building a memorial stadium.

The nearly twenty-four hours beginning Tuesday morning, April 25, 1922, “marked an epoch in the history of the Kansas State Agricultural College.”³⁵⁶ For the modern historian, the excitement of that day is evident in the college’s newspapers; like in Kansas City and Washington, D.C., printed words resonate across time and capture the emotions of those

³⁵⁵ “Stadium Drive to Open Monday Eve,” *Kansas State Collegian*, April 21, 1922.

³⁵⁶ “Stadium,” *1922 Royal Purple*, 431.

moments. The *Collegian* devoted almost the entire issue to coverage of the stadium drive, with various officials and organizations commenting on the stadium's significance and importance. Physical education director Mike Ahearn spoke of the need "to replace the dilapidated and broken-down bleachers and the tottering old grandstand" and the stadium's ability to "awaken in the hearts and minds of the people remembrance of the courageous fellows who so bravely met death that the world might enjoy peace."³⁵⁷ The memorial stadium committee, in twenty-three points, outlined the "who, why, when, and how" of the proposed stadium, opening and closing with the statement, "Make it unanimous."³⁵⁸ The commander of the Manhattan American Legion Post, in language of which Theodore Roosevelt would have been proud, urged all veterans to "feel directly responsible for the success of this drive to build a 'Memorial to Our Buddies'" (a word that shows up in the soldier poetry discussed in Chapter 4), as "A memorial stadium will help to give re-birth to the same type of manhood displayed by these 45 [sic] heroes who gave their lives and the other 2,138 who responded to their country's call."³⁵⁹ This is a notable inclusion, as it stands as one of the only articles written by and for war veterans, evidence that living memorials revere the dead even as they serve the living.

Perhaps the most rousing speech, however, came from football head coach Charles Bachman during the student assembly, in what the *Industrialist* called "one of the most sincere

³⁵⁷ "Popularity in Sports Calls for Stadium," *Kansas State Collegian*, April 25, 1922.

³⁵⁸ "A. B. C.'s for Big Stadium Campaign," *Kansas State Collegian*, April 25, 1922.

³⁵⁹ "Aggies Gave to the Final Taps," *Kansas State Collegian*, April 25, 1922. The citing of 45 Aggie dead, rather than the correct number of 48, is used in articles throughout 1922 and 1923. It is unknown as to why the remaining three were left out of the conversation (so to speak) until the memorial wall in 1929, and the memorial plaques during World War II.

and genuine appeals ever delivered from the platform of the auditorium.” The crux of Bachman’s appeal centered on the idea that the stadium represented a “visible sign of loyalty:”

I wonder how many of you have ever given any real serious thought to why our colleges and universities have almost invariably decided upon the Stadium as the most appropriate memorial to their soldier dead. It is because the Stadium is itself a manifestation—an outward and visible sign of loyalty in its most superb form. It symbolizes that moral and physical courage, that determination, that spirit of glory in achievement that characterized our soldiers on the fields of France. Our soldiers have given the highest proof of loyalty that a man can give; and in dedicating this memorial to them we are but faintly echoing their noblest deeds. They made a great sacrifice for you and for me and we are now privileged to show our gratitude by erecting to their memory this monument of loyalty.³⁶⁰

The “most enthusiastic student assembly since the one in 1909 that saved the engineering school” resulted in a resounding success for the memorial stadium fundraising campaign. Sixty-five thousand dollars in student pledges immediately followed the morning assembly, with additional pledges throughout the afternoon and evening raising the total to \$76,000. Kansas State faculty also contributed, overpledging their quota and reaching \$31,000. Taken together with the contributions from Manhattan, the total amount reached \$147,800 by the first week of May, when the campaign adjourned for the May Festival.³⁶¹

In the weeks following the April 25 event, coverage of the stadium slowed slightly, not surprising given the multitude of events held at the college in May, including the annual May Fete, various sports events, final exams, and graduation (June 1 in 1922). Like their counterparts in Kansas City and D.C., however, the *Collegian* did (over the course of several editions) print

³⁶⁰ “Appeal Wins Students,” *Kansas Industrialist*, April 26, 1922.

³⁶¹ “Students Give \$76,000,” *Kansas Industrialist*, April 26, 1922; “Fund Reaches \$147,800,” *Kansas Industrialist*, May 3, 1922.

the names of faculty and students who contributed to the stadium drive. In making the names of subscribers' public, the newspaper called attention to those who donated while also placing subtle peer pressure on those who had not.³⁶² Not all news was good news, however. Although the KSAC student body pledges earned that group accolades by college officials and the memorial committee, pledges alone would not ensure the completion of the western portion of the stadium by October. Secretary of the Memorial Stadium Corporation Clif Stratton urged "all students and faculty members who can do so to take up at least one of their notes before going home. We need the money badly...in getting the west section ready for use this fall."³⁶³

Stratton and the rest of the memorial committee emphasized the need for hard cash due to that organization's (and likely college officials') desire to begin formally the construction on the west section of the new stadium to make the hoped-for deadline of the October 28 game with the University of Kansas. In late May, the Memorial Stadium Corporation announced that "The contract for the first section of the memorial stadium will be let June 20." Professor L. E. Conrad, head of the department of civil engineering and in charge of the plans and specifications for the stadium, was instructed to advertise for bids for stadium projects such as the drainage system, the towers, and seating decks. According to preliminary estimates, the completion of these projects would cost approximately \$73,000, half the amount pledged in April, but a sizeable sum nonetheless given the lack of actual funds then held by the corporation.³⁶⁴

Unfortunately, the bidding process did not go smoothly. One month after first announcing the start of contract bids, the *Collegian* reported the rejection of the three bids then in

³⁶² The names appear in the May 16, 19, 23, 26, and 31, 1922 editions of the *Kansas State Collegian*.

³⁶³ "Stadium Needs Payments Now," *Kansas State Collegian*, May 26, 1922.

³⁶⁴ "Advertise Stadium Bids," *Kansas Industrialist*, May 24, 1922.

consideration, largely because they were too high. The bidding would open once more on the sixth of July, with a motion by Mike Ahearn to offer a \$2500 bonus “if the first section of the stadium was completed by October 21” unanimously adopted by the committee.³⁶⁵ The round of bidding that opened July 6, however, also failed to bring about a contract. Finally, on July 22, the committee awarded the stadium contract to Walter B. Stingley of Manhattan for “a base price of \$45,000 plus ten percent for personal services of the contractor and the use of all necessary equipment, including tower and building shute.”³⁶⁶ Only a few weeks later, the “excavation and the pouring of concrete for the foundation of the first sections of the west side of the stadium” were underway. While this study focuses on the stadium as known today, the west and east sections, a large part of the 1922 construction centered on remaking the physical landscape around the planned stadium, no small feat and one that consumed time and money. Nonetheless, officials believed “enough of the stadium will be finished to accommodate the Washburn-Aggie crowd at the first game of the season on the new field,” a statement that proved accurate, yet also unknowingly detrimental to Memorial Stadium’s status as an openly acknowledged official memorial.³⁶⁷

“Dream Soon to be Realized”

As summer ended and students returned to Kansas State, work on the west section of Memorial Stadium continued unabated. In mid-September, the *Collegian* stated that “The first section [of the west section] is now practically complete and work has commenced on the second,” the positive progress aided by the presence of over half the necessary building materials

³⁶⁵ “Stadium Bids to be Opened Again on July the 6th,” *Kansas State Collegian*, June 23, 1922.

³⁶⁶ “Stadium Contract is Let to Walter Stingley,” *Kansas State Collegian*, July 21, 1922.

³⁶⁷ “Stadium is Underway,” *Kansas Industrialist*, August 7, 1922.

bought and compiled on site by Mr. Stingley. The contractor promised “that if nothing unforeseen happened, seating accommodations for 1,600 rooters would be completed in time for the first game of the year with Washburn on October 7,” with the potential for up to 3,000 available for the homecoming game against KU on October 28.³⁶⁸ By the end of the month, this number increased to more than 4,000, along with rapid progress on the west section that allowed passersby to “begin to get some notion of what the completed structure will look like.” The Memorial Stadium Corporation also decided to continue the fundraising drive, with the hope of completing the entire west section before the end of 1922.³⁶⁹

The hope of the corporation, and the college community at large, was not realized in 1922, however. True to Mr. Stingley’s word, consistent progress allowed for partial use of the west section during the game against Washburn. The homecoming game against KU, however, likely met with disappointment among current and returning Aggies. With a record crowd of 10,000 on hand to witness Kansas State “bury the jinx” against its Lawrence rival by a 7 to 7 score, most attendees had to sit in the old bleachers not yet demolished, as only three units of the west section stood fully finished, with a fourth under construction.³⁷⁰ This decision to use the completed elements of the west section, rather than wait until the entire structure was completed, arguably affected the “celebratory moment” the college had sought. Had Kansas State delayed use of the section until its full completion, a game further down the road could have been dedicated for that purpose, allowing for greater focus on the stadium. Instead, no dedication occurred, either in 1922 or any years following, with little in the way of commemorating the

³⁶⁸ “Stadium Seats to be Used October 7, *Kansas State Collegian*, September 15, 1922.

³⁶⁹ “More Than 4,000 Seats Ready for Homecoming,” *Kansas Industrialist*, September 27, 1922.

³⁷⁰ “And So They Bury Jinx,” *Kansas Industrialist*, November 1, 1922.

important construction milestones along the way, leaving the stadium undedicated until the present day, a subject to be discussed below.

With the less-than-ideal look of the west section that November, many continued to agitate “for the completion of the stadium as soon as possible” and the extension of fundraising “to the four corners of the earth.”³⁷¹ The continuation of the stadium project into 1923 also did not dampen the spirits of those involved. Like their counterparts in Kansas City and Washington, D.C., who dealt with delays due to unexpected construction issues, timely payment of pledges, or political and aesthetic factors beyond their control, the Kansas State community remained firmly committed to the building of their Memorial Stadium. Student pledges from April continued to be paid, with the new secretary of the memorial corporation reporting on November 10 that “Pledges to the memorial stadium fund have been paid exceedingly well...considering that the most delinquent were made by students who were unable to find work last summer and by persons who are not now connected with K.S.A.C. or Manhattan.”³⁷² Alumni also prepared to make good on their promise of funding, having requested (in April) a deferral until early 1923, with their contributions to cover the remaining estimated cost of the stadium. Finally, some work, such as construction of the storm sewer and intake as well as grading the field, continued throughout the winter, with the contracts for both awarded to Walter Stingley. Construction on the structure itself, specifically, the west section’s remaining units and north tower, was suspended until the spring, with officials confident that the “Realization of the memorial stadium idea, and fulfillment of the memorial stadium dream are just around the corner.”³⁷³

³⁷¹ “Many Urge Completion of Stadium,” *Kansas State Collegian*, October 27, 1922.

³⁷² “Stadium Fund Pledges Paid in Promptly,” *Kansas State Collegian*, November 10, 1922.

³⁷³ “Stadium Bids Opened” and “Dream is Taking Form,” *Kansas Industrialist*, December 6, 1922.

Although the fundraising campaign for Memorial Stadium had not yet finished in 1922, in fact, it would experience a resurgence with the onset of the alumni drive in March, there was one major difference between it and the campaigns in Kansas City and D.C. In the latter two cities, proponents of the Liberty Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial unabashedly, and perhaps excessively in some cases, drew upon the actions and sacrifices of those who served and died to draw attention to their cause. In doing so, they lent somber justification to why citizens of those communities should donate what they could; memorializing the living and dead, regardless of the form that memorial took, was the right thing to do.

As most of quotations cited in the above pages indicate, Kansas State took a different approach. With few exceptions, those involved consistently emphasized the practical need for a stadium over its commemorative purpose. While it is almost refreshing *not* to see the dead used how civic leaders saw fit, the repeated focus on what the stadium would do for Kansas State is striking. Even a December 6 article in the *Industrialist*, directly across from the lengthy piece partially quoted above, bears the misleading title “Tribute to War Dead.” Rather than examine the Aggies whom the stadium was memorializing, the article discusses the movement among American universities to build memorial stadiums. K.S.A.C. itself is not mentioned specifically until the end, and then only to compare its efforts with other schools in the Missouri Valley Conference. This presents an interesting contrast to the other two memorials analyzed in this study.

As 1923 opened, Kansas State alumni prepared for the final drive to complete Memorial Stadium, with the fundraising campaign set to open in early March. In the month prior, Aggies from across the region expressed their willingness to participate, with the “Among the Alumni” section of the *Industrialist* used as the main forum of communication. With one week to go, the

Industrialist created a special “Memorial Stadium Number” issue on March 7 devoted entirely to the alumni drive and promotion of the stadium, like the extensive coverage in the *Collegian* almost a year before. The paper announced that “With the mailing out of the Memorial Stadium book to alumni last week the campaign for subscriptions of the \$325,000 required to complete the stadium entered upon the active phase.” Nearly every county in the state had alumni organized and ready for the drive, with alumni groups outside Kansas “recruiting to full strength in their various communities in order that they may assess themselves for the stadium and avoid the expense of an extensive mail campaign.”³⁷⁴

As with the 1922 campaign, the college’s need for a stadium, rather than the Aggies lost in the war, occupied the most attention. In accepting their alma mater’s challenge to build a stadium, “one of the structures most urgently needed” at the college, alumni argued that Kansas State’s current success in the Missouri Valley Conference demanded a stadium to match such a team. Without it, the college would “sink definitively to a second-rate status, and eventually drift out of the conference.... we cannot expect to schedule home games with the bigger conference schools, and intersectional contests will be out of the question.”³⁷⁵ The implication was clear; Kansas State might have the best football team on the field, but lacking a new stadium, the college would be the embarrassment of the conference, especially as other schools in the conference had embarked on their own stadium building campaigns. Two additional articles support this statement; one describes the history of the movement to build a new stadium at

³⁷⁴ “Kickoff Date March 15,” *Kansas Industrialist*, March 7, 1923.

³⁷⁵ “K.S.A.C. Alumni Accept Alma Mater’s Challenge,” *Kansas Industrialist*, March 7, 1923.

KSAC (one that predated the First World War), while the other provides a history of football at the college, complete with a photograph of the 1894 team.³⁷⁶

The special issue also provided a lengthy reiteration of the stadium's architectural design, noting that "Memorial Stadium will follow in general the design of Nichols Gymnasium. This type of architecture is particularly suited for large, massive structures, and is preeminently a type of design suitable for the native stone used in all the college buildings."³⁷⁷ The subsequent description of design features such as towers, turrets, arches, and battlements indicate, though without stating it directly, the symbolic link between architectural strength and physical strength, physical activity and military activity. The one piece missing, however, is the Aggie men lost in the war. They appear only as part of the evolution of the stadium idea, with the writer stating how "Aggie men and women...gladly and willingly entered their country's service," and "Forty-five yielded their lives on battlefield or in training camp." There follows a list of the men's names, along with their years in attendance at Kansas State.³⁷⁸ That their names do not appear again until the 1923 *Royal Purple* (sent out in May) attests to the observation made above that there was a striking departure from the newspaper coverage in Kansas City and D.C. The men do not receive true public attention until the completion of a mahogany memorial wall in 1929 and the attachment of two bronze plaques on the south towers of the stadium during World War II, referenced below.

Officially launched on March 15, 1923, in Salina, the alumni stadium drive progressed well throughout the rest of that month and into April. Subscriptions up to April 9 totaled

³⁷⁶ "Stadium an Evolution" and "First Aggie Team 1893," *Kansas Industrialist*, March 7, 1923.

³⁷⁷ "Gym Design Followed," *Kansas Industrialist*, March 7, 1923.

³⁷⁸ "Stadium an Evolution," *Kansas Industrialist*, March 7, 1923.

\$12,460, the majority contributed solely by former Aggies in Saline, Sedgwick, and Ottawa counties. This brought the cumulative stadium fund to over \$185,000, leading corporation secretary Dr. J. V. Cortelyou to remark that “The response of the alumni and former students...is heartwarming,” and “Although few have made their gifts larger than \$100, and the general average has suffered correspondingly, the many who have set their contributions at that figure have lent encouragement to the workers for the Stadium cause.”

Despite this good news, a problem emerged. While subscriptions kept coming in, “The amount of cash...has not been sufficiently large in proportion to the size of the pledges to assure the erection of the east section of the Stadium before the football season opens next fall.”³⁷⁹ Thus, while the overall fund total appeared positive, it did not represent the amount of cash available to the corporation for projects then underway, such as work on the playing field, track, and west section. This prevented full completion of the west section until September and postponed construction of the east section until 1924.

As the 1922–1923 school year ended, the senior class prepared to hand out the 1923 *Royal Purple*, dedicated to the Aggies killed in the First World War. The opening pages feature an illustration of the stadium (as planned), and a foreword composed by *Royal Purple* and *Collegian* staff member Harold Hobbs. Echoing the romantic language used by many of the period, including several poets discussed in the next chapter, Hobbs wrote

To honor those Aggie men whose sacrifice in the Great War was supreme; to perpetuate their memory even as that structure rising upon the athletic field shall stand an imperishable monument to an imperishable spirit; to guard the pages too soon destroyed of a story too soon forgotten; and to engrave for ourselves and for the

³⁷⁹ “Fund Totals \$186, 970,” *Kansas Industrialist*, April 11, 1923.

future the history of another year this the Fifteenth Year Book of the Kansas State Agricultural College has been written.³⁸⁰

Hobbs' foreword is followed by an "In Memoriam" listing the men's names, again, only forty-five, rather than the correct number of forty-eight. It is not known why this discrepancy, perpetuated since the earliest discussions on the proposed memorial stadium, continued well into 1923. Given their inclusion on the 1929 memorial wall and 1940s bronze plaques, perhaps they died later of wounds sustained during the war and were then added to the list of Aggie dead. In either case, at least the three men, Ernest Doryland, Willis Pearce, and Howard Wood, were ultimately recognized, unlike the ten SATC members who died of influenza in 1918 but were never included in any memorial features.³⁸¹

The main tribute to the Aggies, however, is arguably the four pages of photos and biographical information in the yearbook. Preceded by an illustration of a soldier playing "Taps" at a flag-adorned cemetery in France, with Canadian poet John McCrae's famous "In Flanders Field" below, the pages turn forty-five names into forty-five faces, bringing a personal touch to an otherwise sanitized statistic. Though not on the scale of the "Lest We Forget" full page tributes to select Kansas City dead, they nonetheless register with the viewer. The pages also provide specific details of date and place of birth as well as military service and death. Here, unlike in the pages of the *Industrialist* and the *Collegian*, it is the Aggie men that predominate, rather than the stadium meant to memorialize them.

By July 1923, it had become apparent that at long last, the end was in sight for the west section. The *Collegian* announced that "The forms are now up for the last unit of the last section

³⁸⁰ 1923 *Royal Purple*, Foreword.

³⁸¹ Willard discusses the SATC men, their deaths, and lack of inclusion on the memorial wall (the plaques had not yet been placed on the south towers) in his *History of Kansas State*, 310–11.

of the stadium...The construction of this section completes the west side of the stadium.”

Although construction on the east side would not begin before 1924, the west side’s completion meant that “a little over one-third of the stadium will be finished.”³⁸² Surprisingly, however, that moment of completion went largely unnoticed, at least in the pages of Kansas State’s newspapers. The fanfare that surrounded the April 1922 and March 1923 drives did not repeat itself in September 1923, when the west section was finally finished. The section was formally accepted by the stadium board on September 7, but the *Industrialist* noted only that “The west section, the first one-third of the stadium, is now completed and in readiness for use this fall.”³⁸³

This tempered enthusiasm is likely due to the task still before the college community: the completion of the east section and the horseshoe piece connecting the two, as well as athletic-related improvements to the field and space underneath the bleachers. Fund drive advertisements continued to appear in both newspapers throughout the rest of 1923, and Walter Stingley, awarded contracts for smaller projects connected to the stadium, kept up a constant stream of construction. In February 1924, the stadium corporation awarded Stingley the contract for the east wing of Memorial Stadium, with construction beginning “as soon as the building season opens,” and “the entire wing [is to be] finished before October 18, the date of the K.U. football game.” Like the year before, available cash remained a problem; corporation members “hoped...that subscribers will make payments promptly when due, or before, if possible, so that the work may go forward steadily.”³⁸⁴

³⁸² “Stadium Fund Passes Half Way Mark With \$251, 224,” *Kansas State Collegian*, July 12, 1923.

³⁸³ “Off for Fall Start,” *Kansas Industrialist*, September 19, 1923.

³⁸⁴ “East Wing Stadium Up,” *Kansas Industrialist*, February 20, 1924.

One month later, work officially began on the east section of the stadium, with all involved insisting the structure “will be ready to handle the crowds at the game next fall season.”³⁸⁵ Additional pledges and subscription payments continued to come in, and although there was a noticeable decline in newspaper coverage of such actions, notices such as the one at the end of April, where the alumni column reported on how a woman’s prompt payment attests to the “spirit that is building the stadium,” are evidence of the college community’s commitment to the stadium cause.³⁸⁶ In June, the *Collegian* reported that “Work on the structure is now three weeks ahead of schedule,” with “Three of the eight sections poured, while work on the fourth has begun.”³⁸⁷ The following month, the report remained the same: “By the time of the first conference football game next fall...the east side of the Kansas State Agricultural college memorial stadium should be finished,” but unpaid pledges must be paid in full as soon as possible.³⁸⁸ The rush on building the east section likely stemmed from the college’s unwillingness to host yet another game against their Lawrence rival in an unfinished stadium. In their haste, however, the stadium corporation amassed more than \$55,000 in debt, one reduced only slowly and thus impacting post-1924 improvements.³⁸⁹

The east wing of Memorial Stadium was indeed ready for use by October, coming in under the promised October 18 deadline by two weeks. That this was greeted with more excitement than the completion of the west section a year earlier is understandable; in “growing a wing,” the stadium now resembled an actual stadium. The cost, however, was high, and it was

³⁸⁵ “Work on East Wing of Stadium Begins,” *Kansas Industrialist*, March 19, 1924.

³⁸⁶ “Among the Alumni,” *Kansas Industrialist*, April 30, 1924.

³⁸⁷ “Stadium Ahead of Schedule,” *Kansas State Collegian*, June 25, 1924.

³⁸⁸ “Rushing East Section,” *Kansas State Collegian*, July 11, 1924.

³⁸⁹ Willard, *History of Kansas State*, 420.

not ignored in the *Industrialist*. The only reason the east wing stood finished, it pointed out, was the “willingness of Manhattan banks and individual residents to extend credit to the Memorial Stadium corporation.” And despite their financial difficulties, members of the corporation “have determined to press the subscription campaign this fall” in order to bring about “completion of the monument to Aggie dead of the World war.”³⁹⁰

Unfortunately, Kansas State’s Memorial Stadium never reached full completion. Major improvements to the structure, such as enclosing walls for the space beneath each section and athletic facilities under the east wing, occurred only as financial conditions permitted. This extended the construction process into the late 1920s and 1930s, by which time the corporation members realized that the planned curved section to connect the two wings was no longer possible. Attempts to initiate erection of a field house in its stead met with no success, leaving the stadium as it appears today. The effects this all had on the formal dedication of Memorial Stadium is a subject taken up in the conclusion.

The construction of Memorial Stadium provided Kansas State with a means to commemorate the First World War while also adding a much-needed sports facility to their campus. Their selection of a living memorial that also emphasized beauty, strength, and power, supports the argument articulated in the Introduction, that categorizing memorials as either traditional or modern greatly simplifies a far more complex reality. Thus, despite its outwardly utilitarian nature and strikingly different appearance from the Liberty Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial, Memorial Stadium’s design drew upon similar notions of aesthetic importance witnessed in Kansas City and Washington, D.C. Taken together, the three memorials illustrate

³⁹⁰ “Seats for 15,000 Ready,” *Kansas Industrialist*, October 1, 1924.

the diversity of World War I memorialization and stand as a living testament to the prominent position held by the First World War in early twentieth century American society.

Chapter 4 - “Along the Road of Memory:” The Use of Poetry as a Means of Remembrance

The examination of soldier poetry provides a more nuanced understanding of American commemorative efforts than do war memorials because the latter, regardless of their architectural design or purpose, represent a more “sanitized” or “acceptable” lens through which Americans remembered and reflected upon the conflict. As demonstrated above, civic leaders and institutional administrators promoted the construction of memorials for a multitude of reasons, consciously choosing to omit or not seek the opinion of most veterans. Memorials, at least the three examined here, thus reflect civilians’ understanding of the war and the war experience rather than the reality of war as experienced by American soldiers. One could in fact argue that memorials largely lack a “story,” or narrative element; architecturally impressive, they nonetheless can leave the viewer with more questions than answers.

In contrast, soldier poetry, even that echoing the hyperbolic patriotic language used by government propaganda agencies like George Creel’s Committee on Public Information (CPI), reflects personal thought and active experience by those serving as direct witnesses to conflict. In analyzing seven soldier poets and their work, this chapter will take a different structural approach than that used in the previous three. Given the sheer number of poems in each volume, and thus the impossibility of discussing each one in detail, the best method of analysis lies in extracting common elements found across all seven volumes. This process has yielded six major themes: an examination of technical devices employed, the presence of medievalism, speaking to the home front, writing about their comrades (living and dead), framing the war and the war experience, and thoughts of home/civilian life.

Soldier Poets as Poets: Analyzing the Technical Elements of the Works

In his prologue to *The Log of the Devil Dog and Other Verses*, Wisconsin native and U.S.

Marine Byron Comstock states:

I have longed for the power of language, to write as the masters do,
For I have seen the vivid heart of it, and I want to show it to you.³⁹¹

The simplicity and directness of Comstock's words stand as a prelude for the rest of the volume; admittedly not a literary "master," Comstock nonetheless wants to share his war experience with an American public audience. For him, and the other soldier poets examined in this chapter, the question was *how*. How does one go about describing the indescribable? This is no minor point. It is important to understand *how* poets are speaking before analyzing *what* they're saying and why it is significant. The soldier poets under consideration here are particularly useful in answering this question, as they represent a cross-section of literary backgrounds, and thus employ a diverse range of linguistic terminology. Take for example, Howard Swazey Buck and Lee Charles McCollum. The former, an educated elite, utilizes high diction even as he seeks to remove the aura of medievalism from descriptions of war. McCollum, on the other hand, admittedly writes "In a Doughboy's own crude way."³⁹² Yet both men invoke powerful emotions and accurate depictions of war and the war experience.

All soldier poets, regardless of social background or literary training, struggled to translate the horrors they witnessed into a language acceptable and comprehensible to the American public. As Pearl James argues in *The New Death*, "For anyone who took up the challenge of writing about the war, how to write about modern war without doing verbal and

³⁹¹ Byron Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog and Other Verses* (Portage, WI: Goodell Publishing, 1920), 9.

³⁹² Lee Charles McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy* (self-published, 1921), 5.

psychic violence either to the reader or to the men who were their subject matter was a problem.”³⁹³ Many soldiers thus sought the “comfortably familiar” vocabulary of their childhood, utilizing words and phrases that might well have come straight out of the works of Sir Walter Scott—in many cases, the same language then employed by George Creel and his propagandist Committee of Public Information.³⁹⁴ That American soldiers had such familiarity with literature should not come as a surprise; as Paul Fussell argues, “The American Civil War was the first...in which really large numbers of literate men fought as common soldiers,” and “By 1914, it was possible for soldiers to be not merely literate but vigorously literary...”³⁹⁵ This constant reading of literary classics (i.e. British classics) helps explain the style and language used by American soldiers to convey their experiences. That poets like Howard Swazey Buck and Byron Comstock break from this tradition (in differing ways) makes their work more interesting and distinct.

Romantic, heroic epics and wartime popular culture, while certainly influential, account for only part of American soldier poets’ language choice and usage. The other key element lies in their individual socio-economic, and by extension, educational and literary, background. cursory as well as detailed examinations of the seven poets and their works point to two groups within the whole. First, there are the social elites: Alan Seeger, Howard Swazey Buck, William Cary Sanger, Jr., William Hervey Allen, and Amy Robbins Ware. Second, there are the socially mainstream or middle class consisting of Lee Charles McCollum and Byron H. Comstock.

³⁹³ Pearl James, *The New Death: American Modernism and World War I* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 5.

³⁹⁴ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 213.

³⁹⁵ Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 157. Although Fussell addresses literature with regards to British soldiers, there are social and cultural commonalities with Americans.

Though the level of available biographical information differs from poet to poet, that which is known sheds critical light on their literary styles and techniques.

That privileged individuals turned soldier poets used intricate rhyme schemes and poetic structure, and high diction is not unexpected or surprising. Steeped in the literary culture of the nineteenth century and highly educated, they had access to a level of literary knowledge and technique not necessarily available to economic “outsiders.” Three of the five upper class poets—Seeger, Sanger, and Buck—graduated from two of the most prestigious universities in the country (if not the world), Harvard and Yale. While Seeger and Sanger stayed true to their backgrounds, employing the most extensive use of medievalist language in their poetry, the exploration of which is the subject of the next section, Buck broke with this tradition in that he uses antiquated language largely as a means of undermining it.

Seeger, Sanger, and Buck attended the institutions they did due to their belonging to established East Coast “old money” families. Seeger and Sanger were both born and raised in and around New York City (Staten Island and Brooklyn, respectively); Sanger’s father was active in New York State politics, and served as Assistant Secretary of War during Theodore Roosevelt’s first term.³⁹⁶ Although Howard Swazey Buck was born in Chicago, his family originated in Maine, descendants of the first waves of Englishmen that settled in Massachusetts Bay. After graduating from Yale in 1886 (the second of three Buck men to attend that university), Buck’s father, Carl Darling Buck, studied at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and Leipzig before returning to the United States to accept a professorship in the department of Sanskrit and Indo-European Comparative Philology at the University of

³⁹⁶ H. Paul Draheim, “Sangerfield House,” *Utica (NY) Daily Press*, August 18, 1951. The article also includes some biographical information on Sanger, Jr., as he was still alive and living in the family home at the time.

Chicago.³⁹⁷ Swazey Buck graduated from Yale the year prior to American entry in the war, and later taught at Chicago, like his father before him.

Hervey Allen and Amy Robbins Ware, though not of quite the same social caliber as Seeger, Sanger, and Buck, were nonetheless members of an educated elite. Born into a “new money” industrialist family in Pittsburgh, Allen graduated from the University of Pittsburgh after leaving the Naval Academy due to injury—the only male member of this group not to attend an Ivy League institution. This did not, however, prevent him from attaining literary heights. His 1921 volume of poetry, *Wampum and Old Gold*, won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition (the same award Howard Swazey Buck won in 1919), the most prestigious literary award of its kind in the country. Allen continued publishing well into his adult life, counting acclaimed writer Robert Frost among his close friends.

The final poet of privilege, Amy Robbins Ware, stands not only as the only female poet included in this study, but as a testament to the important role played by women in the commemorative process. A “daughter of privilege,” Ware was born in Minneapolis, the daughter of Robbinsdale’s (a Minneapolis suburb) founder and descendant of a Mayflower pilgrim. Family history played a significant role in her decision to join the war effort. In the foreword to *Echoes of France*, she speaks of her parents’ role during the Civil War: her father served in the Eighth Regiment Minnesota Volunteers, and her mother was a volunteer nurse at Tripler General Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.³⁹⁸ This likely influenced her writing style as well, given the strong

³⁹⁷ George S. Lane, “Carl Darling Buck,” *Language* 31 (April–June 1955), 181–89. There is also some information available on Carl Darling via Ancestry.com, including his listing under faculty in the 1916 *Cap and Gown* (yearbook for the University of Chicago).

³⁹⁸ Amy Robbins Ware, *Echoes of France: Verses from my Journal and Letters, March 14, 1918 to July 14, 1919 and Afterwards* (Minneapolis, MN: The Farnham Company, 1920), xii–iii.

literary and commemorative connections to the Civil War felt by those of the First World War generation.

Given societal expectations for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Ware reached academic heights, receiving a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Minnesota.³⁹⁹ Her education level is evident in her book, *Echoes of France: Verses from My Journal and Letters, March 14, 1918 to July 14, 1919, and Afterward*. She seamlessly transitions from poems to excerpts from her private diary and letters, employing sophisticated language in both English and French. Her work also features religious overtones and more sentimental or compassionate language not usually seen in men's writings, though this does not detract from her depictions of war as she experienced it.

The final two poets, Byron Comstock and Lee Charles McCollum, come from more modest backgrounds—so far as available evidence indicates. Comstock was born in Portage, but the details of his childhood and adolescence are unknown. It is likely he came from a middle-class family, as his father served as the town's chief of police.⁴⁰⁰ Reading his poetry, it seems likely he attended college; though not employing the technique of the poets above, Comstock's diction and language is more advanced than the average American soldier writing of his war experiences. This is supported by statistical data regarding the education level of Comstock's future unit, the 6th Marine Regiment. According to the regimental commander, Colonel Albertus Catlin, sixty percent of the men attended and/or graduated college. Finally, there are two direct

³⁹⁹ Curt Brown, "Daughter of Robbinsdale's Founder was a Well-to-do Woman Serving on Western Front in World War I," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), November 26, 2016; "Amy Robbins Ware," USGenWebArchives, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/mn/hennepin/bios/1923/robbinsa.txt>.

⁴⁰⁰ Comstock's father's occupation is mentioned in "Portage Marine Wounded," *Stevens Point (WI) Journal*, June 21, 1918.

links to the University of Wisconsin, confirming his educational background. First, there is the headline of a 1920 Madison newspaper article, published upon the release of Comstock's volume of poetry, characterizing him as an "Ex-Varsity Man," though the specific sport is not mentioned.⁴⁰¹ He also appears briefly in the February 1921 issue of *The Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, but his years of attendance are not listed.⁴⁰²

The final poet under consideration, Lee Charles McCollum, is the most elusive of the seven. The son of a glass blower, McCollum was born in Illinois, but moved to Seattle with his mother in the years prior to the war. The information uncovered regarding McCollum's adult life before and after the war suggest a man living below average means. His draft registration card lists his occupation in 1917 as a salesman for a photography company, and the 1930 census states that he did not attend school, though this only referred to the year previous.⁴⁰³ McCollum's poetry reflects this assertion, consisting of basic rhyme schemes and stanza structure, while employing a colloquial "man in the trenches" dialect throughout.

While the soldier poets' backgrounds certainly influenced their diction, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which this consciously factored into their other literary decisions. Those poets with a greater sense of literary awareness (like Seeger or Buck) likely made deliberate choices regarding stylistic elements. For McCollum, or even Comstock, their writing might be

⁴⁰¹ For information on the 6th Marine Regiment, see Mark R. Henry, *U.S. Marine Corps in World War I, 1917–1918* (New York: Osprey Publishing Company, 1999), and Lt. Gen. William K. Jones, Marine Corps Historical Division, ed., *A Brief History of the 6th Marines* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1987); "Byron Comstock, Ex-Varsity Man, Writes War Verse," *The Capital Times* (Madison, WI), December 17, 1920.

⁴⁰² Robert S. Crawford, ed., *The Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* 22 (February 1921): 94.

⁴⁰³ McCollum's personal information was located on Ancestry.com. The records found include his World War I draft registration card, U.S. Army Transport Service Passenger Lists, 1930 Census, and a State of Illinois Certificate of Birth.

less of a formal decision and more a question of what came to them naturally. This is also true of the overall structure of their volumes. The “decision” to present their poems chronologically or thematically may reflect a personal preference as a reader, rather than the conscious decision of a writer. Regardless, the poets’ structure cannot be cast in purely black and white terms. Although six of the seven poets examined emphasize chronology, they do so in different ways and to varying degrees. And while Byron Comstock’s volume is thematic at heart, he too employs a small level of chronology in the form of narrative bookends. That no one structure exists, or that poets exhibit structural crossovers, yet again illustrates the diversity and complex nature of American soldier poetry.

The work that displays the most effective use of chronology, and thus a strong narrative cohesiveness, is Amy Robbins Ware’s *Echoes of France*. This is accomplished not only through a careful arrangement of poems, but through its unique inclusion of diary and letter excerpts as well as wartime photographs. Spanning nearly two years and covering her service in both the American Red Cross and Army Educational Corps as well as her return to Minnesota, Ware’s publication reads like a diary, with a personal intimacy not found in the other six volumes. It is not known why she chose such a format, but the breadth and scope of the work certainly dispels any questions regarding women’s limited participation in and knowledge of the war and its horrors.

The five additional poets that utilize varying degrees of chronology are McCollum, Buck, Sanger, Allen, and Seeger. It is not surprising that the work of Seeger, Sanger, Buck, and Allen exhibit the strongest structural cohesion, as they not only graduated from prestigious universities, but also considered themselves professional writers. Seeger’s *Poems* is especially so, given that it was published posthumously and thus reflective of his entire literary career. Buck’s *The*

Tempering, containing pre-war poems in addition to his war poetry, is neatly divided into two parts, as is Hervey Allen's *Wampum and Old Gold*, thus providing the reader with clear lines of demarcation. In *With the Armies of France*, Sanger also breaks his volume in two, but in a manner less obvious than the three men above. There is no chapter or section outline at the beginning, with the author jumping right into poems primarily composed during his time with the American Ambulance Field Service. Only after this is there a transitional break to his "Additional War Poems," written during his time with the AEF in 1918.

McCollum's *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy* initially appears to lack chronology, with poems reflecting a common soldier's experiences with food, the weather, technology, and various actions involving his "buddies." Halfway through the volume, however, the reader comes across "The Fight of the Lost Battalion," a history of the 77th Division, to which McCollum's 308th Regiment belonged. Thus, McCollum, like Comstock, provides readers with a personal look at his unit's history during the war. He also concludes the volume with a series of poems pertaining to the end of the war, going home, and the war's cost. It is not known why McCollum took such a haphazard approach in structuring his poems, but it is possible his lack of formal education played a role.

Medieval Knights in France: The Presence of Antiquated Language in a Modern War

In his discussion of the impact of the First World War on American society, David Kennedy argues that the American soldier in 1917 went to France "with [his] head full of ideas and images from the past." Against all odds, "medieval notions of battle as an arena for individual heroism, for the display of 'chivalry' and 'honor,' survived virtually intact" despite three years' fighting to the contrary.⁴⁰⁴ On the surface, this appears an inherent contradiction.

⁴⁰⁴ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 178.

Using Alan Seeger as a preeminent example, however, Tim Dayton posits “that the American effort in the First World War was underwritten in part by an ideology through which a modern, industrialized war was embraced in terms derived from the imagined medieval past.”⁴⁰⁵ A brief examination of the literary and historical elements at work within turn of the century American culture helps explain this.

The men who went to war in 1917–1918 grew up steeped in an established medieval literary tradition, one rooted in Victorian Britain and transmitted across the Atlantic. Familiarity with the works of Sir Walter Scott, for example, spanned across the socio-economic spectrum, as did the medieval fiction published by *Harper’s Monthly*. Knowledge of and interest in medievalism also stemmed from what T. J. Jackson Lears termed “soul-sickness”; the emergence (in the late nineteenth century) of a sense that modern life had grown dry and passionless, and that one must somehow try to regenerate a lost intensity of feeling—in this case, through the recreation of a more “primitive” and positive period, Medieval Europe.⁴⁰⁶ To this end, American authors and illustrators, like their Victorian Britain counterparts, created a highly romanticized version of medievalism, one infused with a physical vitality that mirrored the contemporary emphasis on masculinity and “the strenuous life,” as seen in the chapter on Memorial Stadium.

This romantic medievalism corresponded with, and reinforced, existing romantic views of war held by Americans armed with vivid nostalgia of the Civil War. If one thinks about the hold that event still has on the national memory and psyche, it is easy to imagine the mentality of those who grew up in the decades immediately following the conflict. Though the doughboys of

⁴⁰⁵ Tim Dayton, “Alan Seeger: Medievalism as an Alternative Ideology,” *First World War Studies* 3:2, 125.

⁴⁰⁶ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 142.

World War I had not directly experienced the Civil War, they might as well have; young, impressionable boys listened with awe as family members “passed on the lore of Bull Run and Vicksburg, Chickamauga and the Wilderness, Cold Harbor and the Sunken Road, Antietam and the Bloody Angle.” Though aged, veterans too spoke of war “as an adventurous and romantic undertaking,” idealized rhetoric reflected in the words and deeds of men such as Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., the latter two reflective of an “older elite” that historian Henry May has described as “the beleaguered defenders of nineteenth-century tradition” and the “custodians of culture.”⁴⁰⁷

Romantic conceptions of medieval Europe and warfare, while part of American culture generally, resonated strongest with the “young acquaintances” of May’s older elites; young men who, like Roosevelt, attended the nation’s preeminent prep schools and Ivy League universities. It is thus not surprising that of the soldier poets examined here, those with such backgrounds exhibit the most romanticism in their works, with Alan Seeger the clear frontrunner and trendsetter. Exhibiting a penchant for medievalism over materialism and modernity while still an undergraduate at Harvard, Seeger later convinced his parents of the need for him to go to Paris to “expand his cultural and poetic horizons”; the poet’s extremely sympathetic biographer William Archer later wrote that Seeger had gone to Paris in 1912 “in the spirit of a romanticist of the eighteen-forties.”⁴⁰⁸ With the outbreak of war in 1914, Seeger, “interpreting the war as a form of

⁴⁰⁷ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 178; Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912–1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 363.

⁴⁰⁸ Dayton’s essay on Seeger contains an excellent discussion of Seeger’s undergraduate essay. See Dayton, “Alan Seeger,” 126–29; Alisa Miller, “‘An American Soldier-Poet:’ Alan Seeger and War Culture in the United States, 1914–1918,” *First World War Studies* 1:1, 17; William Archer, Introduction to Alan Seeger, *Poems* (New York: Scribner’s, 1917), xxi.

‘Strife’ and as an assertion of medieval values,” joined the French Foreign Legion, serving with that unit until his unceremonious death by machine gun fire on the Somme in July 1916.⁴⁰⁹

Given the extensive analysis of Seeger’s war poems by Tim Dayton and Alisa Miller, this section will not attempt an examination of his work that would simply rehash material already closely analyzed, but rather focus on the remaining six soldier poets who have not received critical attention. Since, however, “The ghost of Alan Seeger, and of the nineteenth-century literary conventions he exemplified” persisted in the writings of those after him, his work will appear as a reference point throughout the discussion. Seeger’s literary impact on soldier poets and American soldiers generally was not of his own doing. Shamelessly utilized by May’s custodians of culture and George Creel’s CPI, Seeger went from a relatively unknown literary figure to “America’s Rupert Brooke,” as his “uplifting descriptions of war, cast in the literary conventions of the medieval romance, admirably fitted their own views.”⁴¹⁰ Viewed in this context, then, his work was bound to reach a wide audience.

The consistency with which Alan Seeger employed romanticized medievalist language does not carry over in the works of the remaining soldier poets under study; rather, each uses such language to varying degrees, with William Cary Sanger closest to the New Yorker and Byron Comstock most successful at breaking from him. That all but Comstock employ some form of medievalism attests to the hold the nineteenth-century literary tradition maintained on Americans. The gradual movement away from or slow abandonment of it clearly proves the point that the American literary response to the First World War cannot simply be defined as

⁴⁰⁹ Dayton, “Alan Seeger,” 125.

⁴¹⁰ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 213 and 181.

either romantic/patriotic or disillusionment, with far more gray in what is often portrayed as a purely black and white transition.

Seeger's fellow East Coast elite and Harvard graduate William Cary Sanger, Jr. is second to that poet in his employment of medievalist language. Like Seeger, with whom he shared a near-identical background, Sanger's upbringing "formed him in such a way that it would be astonishing had he not shared in the post-Romantic poetic culture" analyzed by twentieth-century historians such as Paul Fussell.⁴¹¹ Although Sanger did not rush to join the war like Seeger (he graduated Harvard in 1916), he did cast his first presidential vote for Woodrow Wilson and participated in the Plattsburg Military Training Camp in 1916.⁴¹² Established by influential (read upper class) Americans of the Preparedness Movement, the "Plattsburg Camps" emphasized physical and military training while advocating for American entry into World War I. Two of Sanger's poems, "Reveille" and "Taps," offer clear evidence of the camps' message to the young men in attendance. There are numerous references to elements of medieval warfare; in, for example, "Reveille": "A bugle call and a rampart wall / And a day of sword and lance." In "Taps," the poet symbolically refers to soldiers' death in battle as having "tasted the chalice of pain." And in a direct echoing of Seeger, Sanger in "Reveille" devotes the final stanza to a postwar world:

Dawn—on the fields of Flanders,
Dawn—on the Marne and the Aisne,
Free from strife—new homes and life
Gladden the waking plain.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Dayton, "Alan Seeger," 126. Dayton is describing Seeger here, but I believe it fits Sanger just as well.

⁴¹² Draheim, "Sangerfield House."

⁴¹³ William Cary Sanger, Jr., *With the Armies of France* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1918), 4, 26.

The presence of medievalist language continues even after Sanger departs for France, first as a member of the American Ambulance Field Service (December 1916–May 1917) and later as part of the AEF’s 33rd Division.⁴¹⁴ In sharp contrast to the writings of other American ambulance drivers’ writings, notably those of John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, Sanger, while serving at Verdun, writes not of the horrendous casualties incurred by the French but of the fortress itself, the “rock of immortal France” and “defender of the land,” whose ramparts withstood the “unnumbered bands” of the enemy.⁴¹⁵ Several of his later poems, written in 1918, read like medieval ballads; “A Soldier’s Thoughts at Sunset” begins with the lines “Sing me my favorite songs tonight: / The songs of love and the moon’s fair light.” While war literature of all forms often references nature, Sanger’s descriptions in this poem are strongly reminiscent of Seeger’s “three idols—Love and Arms and Song,” themselves a reference to Seeger’s embrace of Elizabethan chivalry as embodied by Sir Philip Sidney and rejection of the world of industrial capitalist modernity.⁴¹⁶

Romanticism also shapes Amy Robbins Ware’s view of war in *Echoes of France*, despite its later (1920) publication date. One is immediately struck by two images, placed just after the title page: “To the Nearest of Kin of [blank space left for name] who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the Allies,” and “In Memoriam,” with the text contained within the shape of a stained-glass window. Fusing religious iconography with medievalist overtones, the dedications use words such as “ye,” “rest” (rather than death), and “rendezvous” (harkening back to Seeger’s “I Have a Rendezvous with Death), while also linking “those who won in Freedom’s cause / A

⁴¹⁴ Draheim, “Sangerfield House.”

⁴¹⁵ Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 8.

⁴¹⁶ Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 31; For a discussion of Seeger’s “Love and Arms and Song,” see Dayton, “Alan Seeger,” 130–33, where he analyzes Seeger’s “Sonnet I.”

matchless Immortality” with Christ.⁴¹⁷ Ware’s motivations in including such imagery are unclear, though given her adherence to romanticism ala Seeger and Sanger, it seems plausible that she thought the two made for an emotionally powerful tribute to those that died in the war. What is certain is that both images, combined with the volume’s official dedication, set the tone for the entire book. The latter, though lacking a visual element, uses language that Seeger himself would have been proud of:

To
The lads who “Went West”
And were sleeping there ‘neath
The flower-strewn fields or in
No-Man’s-Land of Far-away
Happy-sad France this little
Book is Reverently Dedicated.⁴¹⁸

Ware’s romanticized language, however, diverges from men such as Seeger and Sanger in that she writes with a greater level of sentimentality and emotion. Without minimizing the value of Ware’s work or her contributions in France as a member of the Red Cross, it is necessary to point out that as a woman, her style of writing stands apart from the men of this study. It is not that they lack emotion or feeling (their poetry indicates otherwise) but rather that as male poets, they simply cannot express the same level of empathy and compassion without readers calling into question their very manhood; one need only recall the language employed by government propaganda or the advocates of Memorial Stadium to understand this.

Readers of *Echoes of France*, however, likely expected a softer tone from Ware; for her, the use of romantic, antiquated language fit perfectly with what people of the period might have termed her “womanly sensibilities.” One element that is particularly telling is her many

⁴¹⁷ Ware, *Echoes of France*, dedications (no page numbers).

⁴¹⁸ Ware, *Echoes of France*, dedication (no page number).

references to soldiers under her care as “my son.” Having possibly “escaped” a tenuous marriage that lacked children, Ware appears to have projected her motherly instincts onto wounded and dying soldiers.⁴¹⁹ One entry is especially telling; writing of a nineteen-year-old soldier shot through the lungs, Ware writes

How well I remember, dear lad, the night I came to you out of the agonies of that unspeakable hell, in which you had been changed from the gay boy you must have been, to the wonder-man for whom I came to care so tenderly. You said you had no mother, and I—I have no son!

Unable to “let you die,” she “held you steady while the tortures that meant life to you, tore my very soul to shreds.” After his departure to (presumably) another hospital, Ware concludes by writing,

Dear boy, you might have been my son. And I have never known if you survived that journey, or whether you lie buried there in that sad France, which I should love more tenderly, if you were sleeping there.⁴²⁰

Howard Swazey Buck and Hervey Allen, on the other hand, despite their socially prominent backgrounds and educations, depart from this heavily romanticized language and reliance on medievalist analogies. This is particularly interesting in Buck’s case, given his graduation from Yale and being awarded the first Yale Series of Younger Poets prize for *The Tempering*. Although the first three poems in Part II (“Poems of the War”) use terms like “hero-warrior,” “warrior,” “armor,” and “fabled dragons” (potentially a reference to St. George and the Dragon, a popular medieval symbol), they do not do so emphatically or repeatedly. In “Le Mort”

⁴¹⁹ Amy Robbins married J. R. Ware in 1907, when she was thirty years old. Although listed as living together in 1910, upon her return from France in 1920, Ware lived with her mother. When she died in 1929 at the age of fifty-one, her death certificate listed her as divorced. Brown, “Daughter of Robbinsdale’s Founder.”

⁴²⁰ Ware, *Echoes of France*, 62–64.

(The Dead), Buck, despite writing of “the honored dead” and how “flaring star-shells,” like “white meteor-tapers,” kept vigil over the body, also opens the poem by describing how

Here on this stretcher now he coldly lies,
A burlap sack hiding his beaten head.
The idle hands seem heedless lumps of lead,
And the stiff fingers of abnormal size.
I almost stooped to brush away the flies,
Musing if yet she knew that he was dead.⁴²¹

This more realistic portrayal of war’s effect on man continues in “Objective Gained.” Employing language likely unfathomable to Seeger, Sanger, and Ware, Buck speaks sardonically and with black humor on the cost of military objectives:

But always that town we win,
Where the huddled streets roar down to death,
Black doorways, with Work, Work, Work within.—
He had a grin, but he had no chin—
What did he put his dinner in?”⁴²²

While not typical, or even prevalent throughout, of Buck’s volume, the mere presence of such stark language nonetheless serves to illustrate how some writers, even as they continued to use (in part) elevated language reminiscent of the nineteenth century, gradually moved away from Seeger’s romantic medievalism in favor of more accurate depictions of modern warfare. This is the case with Hervey Allen’s *Wampum and Old Gold*. Published three years after *The Tempering*, Allen’s work largely lacks medieval references and contains several poems, analyzed in later sections, that in fact challenge long-standing romantic language. Allen’s lone “medieval” poem is in fact more a lesson on the power of such language; the opening lines of “Soldier-Poet” (dedicated to a fellow soldier who died) read:

I think at first like us he did not see

⁴²¹ Howard Swazey Buck, *The Tempering* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1918), 45.

⁴²² Buck, 47.

The goal to which the screaming eagles flew;
For romance lured him, France, and chivalry;
But Oh! Before the end he knew, he knew!⁴²³

In different ways, Lee Charles McCollum and Byron Comstock echo Allen's more direct divergence from the Seeger-Sanger-Ware model. Also publishing their volumes in 1921, McCollum and Comstock demonstrate the least adherence to romanticized language; McCollum by taking a basic "boots on the ground" approach, and Comstock by directly challenging it, something that will be analyzed further in a later section.

That it takes until 1921 for this to happen is not surprising, given the powerful hold of the nineteenth century and its literary traditions on the generation of Americans fighting in France during World War I. And although John Dos Passos's virulently antiwar novel, *Three Soldiers*, came out that same year, Americans continued to remain reluctant to disconnect fully from the romanticism of the previous century. Only with the passage of time, and the growing realization that Creel's propaganda had been just that, was the war recast in more skeptical, even negative terms. This perhaps explains why novels such as Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and former German soldier Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), published ten years after the end of the war, received such high acclaim.

Reality versus Illusion: Soldier Poets Speak to the Homefront

In his analysis of the Great War's influence on American visual culture, David Lubin points out that while American civilians were aware of the horrors of the war from the outset, "they were slow to realize how truly ugly and awful the conflict had been." Arguably, the main reason for this stemmed from the government's immediate, and quite effective, use of propaganda. Under the direction of George Creel, the CPI commissioned thousands of paintings,

⁴²³ Hervey Allen, *Wampum and Old Gold* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921), 60.

posters, sculptors, cartoons, and illustrated lectures to engage Americans in the war effort.⁴²⁴

This resulted in sanitized depictions of the war's horrors and destructive capabilities—depictions reinforced in the letters of American soldiers stationed overseas. This is not to say, however, that the presence of seemingly antiquated and inappropriate language (given the realities of combat on the Western Front) equates to the influence or acceptance of government propaganda. Rather, as Pearl James argues, it is often what is *not* said that bears significant weight. While part of this “light-hearted approach” can be attributed to wartime censorship, it is also (as outlined in the opening section) indicative of participants' difficulty in finding a way to convey their experiences. Amiable to loved ones back home, this language may also have been a means of masking from others, and perhaps even themselves, the emotional and psychological scars of the war. Inadvertently, however, this decision only widened the gap between the war's reality and the war's illusion as presented to the American public.⁴²⁵

The poets under analysis here addressed the homefront in a variety of ways, though all except Seeger did so either as the war ended or in the several years following the armistice. Although the volumes, as published works meant to be read by an audience, collectively speak to the homefront, there are specific poems that do so in a more direct manner. A selection of these poems will be examined here, and the volumes' publication date as a marker of context influences the message each sought to convey to their civilian readership. Having voluntarily enlisted in the French Foreign Legion and, as his poems illustrate, believing passionately in the

⁴²⁴ David Lubin, *Grand Illusions: American Art & the First World War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 243, 73.

⁴²⁵ Lubin, *Grand Illusions*, 245; Kennedy, *Over Here*, 213. In her book, *The New Death*, Pearl James “interprets not only the words but the silences of its chosen texts;” Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, and William Faulkner's *Sartoris*.

Allied cause, Alan Seeger naturally questioned why, by 1916, his home country had yet to enter the war. Seeger roundly criticizes America's neutrality in the aptly-named "A Message to America." Although recognizing that Americans "have the grit and guts" and are "ready to answer blow for blow," Seeger states that such aggressiveness extends only within Americans' "own back-yard." He contrasts America's attitude with that of France:

They wanted the war no more than you,
But when the dreadful summons blew
And the time to settle the quarrel came
They sprang to their guns, each man was game;
And mark if they fight not to the last
For their hearths, their altars, and their past:
Yea, fight till their veins have been bled dry
For love of the country that *will* not die.

Fusing his love for France with his trademark romantic language, Seeger closes with an emotionally-laden stanza challenging Americans to take notice and learn from France's example:

O friends, in your fortunate present ease
(Yet faced by the self-same facts as these),
If you would see how a race can soar
That has no love, but no fear, of war,
How each can turn from his private role
That all may act as a perfect whole,
How men can live up to the place they claim
And a nation, jealous of its good name,
Be true to its proud inheritance,
Oh, look over here and learn from FRANCE!⁴²⁶

Through his "Message to America," then, Seeger perpetuates the vision of war as a positive and sought-after experience. For pro-war advocates, Seeger's words provided a perfect rallying cry, and it is likely that this poem caught their immediate attention when using Seeger for propaganda purposes.

⁴²⁶ Seeger, *Poems*, 162–66.

Propagandists not only sought to portray the First World War in positive terms, but also to reinforce why Americans and American involvement were necessary to the Allied war effort. In “For the People of the World,” written in 1918, William Cary Sanger emphasizes this very point. He reminds Americans that

In these dark days
When tyranny and might
Strive to enslave the earth...
Thou dost send
Thine armies—
Millions of thy sons
To stem the tyrant’s tide
And at the last
To drive his savage hordes
Back to the land from whence they came,
And win for liberty and righteousness
The lasting and immortal victory.

Though unsaid, Sanger is referring to Germany here, with the implication, aided by the inclusion of the antiquated “thine” and “thy,” that like the Mongol or Germanic “hordes” of the past, so too will the German army be driven “back from the land from whence they came.” Sanger goes on to write, however, that America’s greatest gift to the world is “The high idealism of thy world democracy,” a direct echo of President Wilson’s statement that the United States must enter the war to “make the world safe for democracy.” Through its participation in the war as well as the ensuing peace, America would bring about “Freedom and truth and world-wide brotherhood,” the last a likely reference to Wilson’s proposed League of Nations. Ending with lines reminiscent of a religious hymn—yet another medievalist reference and one in line with American sentiments and values—Sanger hails America:

All hail to thee, Republic of the West,
God guide thee in the hour of battle
And in the years of peace

Which are to come.⁴²⁷

Despite the cessation of hostilities in November 1918, poetry published after that date nonetheless carries messages, lessons, even warnings, for American civilians. It is no coincidence that poets Lee Charles McCollum, Byron Comstock, and Hervey Allen, whose literary rhetoric, as stated above, moves away from the heavy romanticism of Seeger and Sanger, speak with more direct realism, even criticism, to their audiences. Of all the soldier poets here, McCollum offers perhaps the best insight into the difficulties of those back home awaiting news from France. While not writing to the homefront per se, “Those Who Wait” communicates sympathy for mothers of soldiers, as if to affirm their emotions during the war while also reminding Americans of women’s seemingly endless wait for news on their sons:

Who knows the thots of mothers who wait,
Whether in grandeur, or lowly state,
Who knows the sacrifice of those who give
There all, their sons, that we might live?⁴²⁸

McCollum also warns Americans, however, not to judge those returning sons solely on the presence, or lack of, “bronze and medal,” “the colored ribbon,” or “gold stripes upon the arm,” as these are all “Made by the hand of man.” This poem, simply titled “The Medal,” likely reflects McCollum’s own experience or that of comrades who, in the immediate aftermath of the war, came home to an American public eager for decorated soldiers and tales of glory, an attitude witnessed in the many victory parades held throughout the country in the months immediately following the armistice. If McCollum’s message fails to convince readers, he closes with a reassurance to his fellow veterans:

⁴²⁷ Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 35–36.

⁴²⁸ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 22–23. McCollum’s use of “thots” instead of “thoughts” here and in other poems further down, is reflective of his “everyday man in the trenches” diction.

No bit of bronze or ribbon bright,
Or words of praise high spoken,
Can change the thots that lie within,
As they are the real true token.

They'll tell the tale as long as you live,
And the truth of how you fought,
If you played the game like a man, my friend,
You've the medal, that can't be bought.⁴²⁹

In a similar, though harsher, manner, Hervey Allen also issues a warning to Americans, not regarding returning soldiers, but rather those that lie “in a glade in Argonne.” Taking a more direct and reproachful tone, Allen adamantly demands that “Orators and Others” keep their “Hands off our dead!” His disgust of those that might use the dead for political purposes is evident in the final stanza:

Hands off our dead! For all they did forebear
To drag them from their graves to point some speech;
Less sickening was the gas reek over there,
Less deadly was the shrapnel's whirring screech;
You cannot guess the uttermost they gave;
Those martyrs did not die for chattering daws
To loot false inspiration from the grave
When mouthing fools turn ghouls to gain applause.⁴³⁰

Allen continues this diatribe in the final poem of his volume, “We.” It is a bold pronouncement of returning soldiers' expectations now that they “have walked with death in France” and “came through all that devil's dance,” as well as a direct refutation of Alan Seeger's “I Have a Rendezvous with Death.” One need only compare the first stanzas of each poem to understand Allen's purpose:

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade

⁴²⁹ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 16–17.

⁴³⁰ Allen, *Wampum and Old Gold*, 59.

And apple-blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

...

We who have come back from the war,
And stand upright and draw full breath,
Seek boldly what life holds in store
And eat its whole fruit rind and core,
Before we enter through the door
To keep our rendezvous with death.

Firmly convinced that “The time is ours by right divine,” Allen asserts that soldiers will no longer tolerate “musty creeds,” instead following “where the cold facts lead / And bow our heads no more.” Allen’s exact feelings on American society’s treatment of veterans once the aura of 1918 wore off are unknown, but given *Wampum and Old Gold*’s 1921 publication date, it seems likely that “We” is an accurate depiction of Allen’s opinions on what veterans deserved from both society and government. That the poem’s sentiments did not translate into reality makes the poem’s scathing tone all the more poignant.⁴³¹

Byron Comstock’s message to Americans, delivered through his poems “The Skyman” and “We Have Won,” directly counters the positive view of the war held by many Americans. In the first, Comstock addresses air combat, a new “field” of battle during the First World War that appeared glamorous and heroic to civilians and troops in the trenches alike. As a Marine on the Western Front, Comstock likely witnessed numerous “dogfights,” but unlike many front-line soldiers, did not walk away awed by their supposed valor. Avoiding romantic diction in writing about arguably the most romanticized aspect of the war, Comstock depicts less the arrogant, self-assured pilot, but rather one at war with himself. Recognizing his position as “a king in the great

⁴³¹ Seeger, *Poems*, 144; Allen, *Wampum and Old Gold*, 68–69.

blue ring of the vast and cloud-piled sky,” the pilot remarks on his ability to “see men fall” (due to his actions) but not “hear them yell”—a stark conveyance of airmen’s attitudes regarding their separation from the horrors below; they are responsible for death but do not feel its repercussions.⁴³²

Or do they? Comstock then transitions to a back-and-forth exchange where the pilot simultaneously asserts and questions his power and authority to kill. Although his “purpose is to kill” and he longs “to see blood spill,” the “slaughter drives me [him] mad.” This inner turmoil continues further in the poem, with the pilot forced to justify his actions and minimize the effects they have on his psyche: “I would not do the things I do, I swear not, but I must. / What to me is earth’s red sea and those specks in the lowly dust?” Killing is morally wrong, but acceptable under present conditions, and he deflects personal responsibility for that killing through the characterization of men as “specks.” The climax of the poem, however, is possibly Comstock’s best refutation of the heroism of air warfare. The lines describe one of the famous “dogfights,” but not in the manner readers typically heard:

Then up there soars, and above the roars I hear the spiteful spit.
Two madmen fly in the empty sky, in their game of nerve and wit.
A sickening crash, an oily splash, my God the tank is hit.

A crackling sound, I dare not look round, why does the plane shake
so?
In a burst of flame no hand can tame, the plane drops hard and low.
A skyman lost, I pay the cost, from Heaven to Hell I go.⁴³³

⁴³² Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 24.

⁴³³ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 25.

Without mincing words, Comstock illustrates the horrific brutality and mechanized nature of aerial combat. Instead of the romantic “knights in the sky,” there is just death, experienced in as gruesome a manner as that experienced by men in the trenches.

Similarly, Comstock addresses the armistice and the Paris Peace Conference, casting it in far starker terms than the joyous occasion celebrated by many on the Western Front and Americans at home. “We Have Won” opens with Death,

A terrible figure in cowl and gown, stalks across the blackened
fields,
On his fleshless face, a grin, as one
Who sees his work well done in the battle’s red rage.

Here, it is Death, not the living or Allied armies, that has achieved victory. Comstock’s gruesome portrayal of “victory” lies in sharp contrast to the “intellects of nations” gathering at Versailles outside Paris, to determine “what will be written on the final page.”⁴³⁴ Here, too, Comstock ignores the pomp and circumstance surrounding the Paris Peace Conference, painting the meeting in more realistic terms; largely ignorant of, or indifferent to, the war’s true effects, Allied leaders Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, and David Lloyd George prepare to determine the nature of the peace.

Comstock continues in this vein in the second stanza, once more contrasting the horrific aftermath of war with events occurring in Paris. He writes of winter covering the dead, “our rotting glory,” only to have the warmth of spring, typically seen in a positive light, expose “grim relics of twisted steel” and “here and there, a decayed hand reaches forth from shallow grave.” There is a clear skepticism here, with Comstock indirectly challenging the very cause for which he himself fought. This skepticism and sarcasm is brought home in the final line of the poem,

⁴³⁴ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 15.

where he states, “In a famous hall, the learned have written victory on our page, and we have won.”⁴³⁵ There is no joy here, no cause for celebration. Rather, Comstock emphasizes the hollowness of victory, questioning what in fact has been won. In his abandonment of Seeger and Sanger’s “tell the people what they want to hear” approach, Comstock stands as an important bridge between the heroic and patriotic language of 1917–1918 and the more disillusioned literature of the mid-1920s—further evidence of which will be seen in the section on soldier poets’ framing of the war and the war experience.

“Buddies:” Writing of their Comrades, both Living and Dead

Stationed at Field Hospital No. 41 and Evacuation Hospital No. 9 in the fall of 1918, during the height of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, Amy Robbins Ware witnessed countless truck convoys transporting “high-spirited soldiers” toward the front:

‘Twas only today, — this morning,
I followed the swift moving train
Bearing its burden of brave men
Into the Valley of Pain.

Hour after hour they have rolled on
Winding their tortuous way,
Rumbling, camouflaged monsters
Transporting the troops all day.

Too many of the young men, or so it must have seemed, traveled back the way they came, this time in ambulances:

They’ll be *carried* to us, on that shell-torn road,
Those wrecks of gallant men!
Lord grant that we hold a steady nerve
That we shall not fail them then.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 15.

⁴³⁶ Ware, *Echoes of France*, 49–51.

Here, and throughout her lengthy volume, Ware demonstrates that one did not necessarily need to be “buddies” with American soldiers to write about them. For her and the soldier poets (as well as arguably any person in direct contact with the war), part of the war experience included a depiction of soldiers, particularly those close comrades with whom one had daily interactions. Such writings took different forms, depending on literary style and level of personal contact; the male soldier poets examined here, for example, had a greater level of comrade-oriented friendships than Ware, who, as the previous section illustrated, viewed soldiers through a mother-son prism. Regardless of their method, however, all speak to the dead more often than the living—a decision that allows for comparison with the memorials analyzed earlier in this study. It is perhaps no coincidence that the works containing a prevalent use of romanticized language echo the rhetoric of civilians in Kansas City, Manhattan, and D.C. (the first two especially so), whereas those that move beyond, or attempt to move beyond, antiquated language offer a more genuine tribute to their comrades, living and dead.

On the surface, this may seem an unfair comparison, given that civilians operated within a very different framework regarding their conceptualization of the war. However, as we have already seen, city and college leaders did not actively seek to truly understand their soldiers’ experiences nor incorporate returning veterans’ ideas into the aesthetic designs, believing, even assuming, their efforts spoke to the dead in the way the dead would want. It is also important to reiterate that despite their genuine sincerity in wanting to remember the dead, civic leaders used those very same dead men to achieve an end—a physical symbol of remembrance that also drew attention (and potential tourists or students) to their community, especially in the case of Kansas City and Manhattan. The volumes of poetry—with the arguable exception of Alan Seeger, and then only as Seeger’s death allowed others to exercise control over his poetry—though certainly

composed with the idea of publication and readership, do not have this promotional element, and it seems unlikely that the poets imagined their volumes would propel them to literary fame and fortune.

With its simple language and told “in a Doughboy’s way,” Lee Charles McCollum’s *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy* features some of the more personal and genuine “Buddies” poems; in fact, the title of this section is derived from his poem of the same name. Conveying a strong sense of comradeship, “Buddies” illustrates how

From the North, the East, South or West,
When called upon, we sent our best,
And thru that “Melting Pot” o’er there,
Hearts were moulded, souls laid bare.

...

From as small a thing, as— “Gimme a light,”
To laying down his life in a fight,
There was no color, nor was there creed,
Whenever a “Buddy” was in need.

...

Country, color, creed or station,
Were moulded as one, in War’s Devastation,
When “Buddies” went on to that unknown goal,
Shoulder to shoulder, soul to soul.⁴³⁷

McCollum’s exact reasoning for an optimism that ignored a complicated racial and social hierarchy is unknown, but his poem “Treasures” may provide an answer. Set “in a stranded outpost” with “my Dago chum,” the poem tells the story of the Italian soldier Tony’s immigration to America—a place without kings and queens, of liberty:

So by-un-by I grow up,
Beega strong-a boy, ‘bout seexteen,
And I come along in a steerage boat,

⁴³⁷ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 55.

To the land of which I dream.

And there I find-a joosta so true,
Evra-ting is a-right;
I'm-a live in-a great-a country,
My own-a boss day and night.

Tony's willingness to die for his adoptive country, which he does at the end of the poem, moves McCollum to conclude:

He took and shook me by the hand,
And started out alone,
To me it brought an awakening,
And the treasure now I own.

So I'm done with material treasures,
Relics, mines, and things,
And treasure instead the memories,
Of love that sacrifice brings.⁴³⁸

This illustrates that while African American troops were subject to the same racism as before, for some minorities the war provided an opportunity for acceptance into mainstream American society.⁴³⁹

Although the poems above lend support to David Kennedy's (and others') assertion that American soldiers persisted in writing positively and nostalgically about their experiences long after the armistice, McCollum's even-handed approach throughout his poetry suggests that such sentiments did, in some cases, reflect actual emotions and thoughts. It is clear McCollum certainly felt this way; "Treasures" indicates that bonds forged in combat lasted after death, with the poet expanding on this in "The Debt," an emotionally complex poem far removed from the patriotic poetry of men such as Seeger and Sanger. After the death of a "buddie,"

⁴³⁸ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 44–47. "Dago" is period slang for a person of Italian ancestry.

⁴³⁹ For more information on this, see Richard Faulkner's *Pershing's Crusaders*, 232–59.

My blood boils up in red, red rage,
And I lose the last of my will;
I'm turned to beast and mad man,
And my cry is to kill—to kill!

Having just witnessed his friend's death from enemy fire, the living soldier must now avenge that death; the "debt" must be "repaid." But the last two stanzas refute this vengeful tone, marked instead with only grief over the loss. Acknowledging that it is impossible to "square the debt," as this will not bring the dead friend back, McCollum tells his "Pal" to "rest in peace o'er here, / 'Neath the new-made cross that you've won,"—an emotional and ironic end that is reminiscent of Comstock's "We Have Won."⁴⁴⁰

McCollum's final poem, "Phantoms," is a haunting eulogy. In a scene reminiscent of the final sequence of Abel Gance's 1919 film *J'accuse*,

Phantom heroes gather there,
In shell-torn land, so bleak and bare,
And there beneath the sighing tree,
They are judging you and me.⁴⁴¹

As in the film, the dead seek to know if their sacrifices had been in vain; here, however they judge the veterans rather than civilians, as if holding them accountable for upholding their memory. There is a tragic element at work here, however, beyond the obvious. The dead, gathering together in the No Man's Land where they died, look to the living for support, yet their comrades struggle to find acceptance in postwar American society and, as the three chapters on memorials argue, appear largely unable to exert influence over the memorialization process.

Although it is difficult to assess with certainty McCollum's precise thoughts on war

⁴⁴⁰ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 43.

⁴⁴¹ Jay Winter opens Chapter 1 of *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* with a detailed description of the film's final sequence; McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 64.

commemoration, the somber tone of “Phantoms,” taken together with his emphasis on returning veterans and their plight in his poetry, suggests he believed living veterans deserved public attention just as much as the dead.

The somberness of McCollum’s final poem finds common ground with Byron Comstock’s treatment of the same subject. Characteristic of Comstock’s entire volume, where he avoids triumphal and glorified language in favor of a more realistic grittiness, “The Dead” illustrates the cost of war. In perhaps a direct criticism against civilian memorialization efforts, Comstock writes of

Each crude and uncarved cross, a fitting monument
To mark, in life’s frail curtain, each ragged bloody rent.
They, in their awful silence, red pages in the story,
Each a battered body, that paved the paths of glory.

He further challenges the “pomp and glare of victory” in stating

No garlands fair, nor trumpets’ blare ushered into space
These heroes, who were chosen messengers of the race.
No, falling as they did, in the midst of that hot roar,
Their graves are but the gates where the soul was left to soar,
Into the realm of the unknown, unhampered by the clay,
A garment of the earth, to be worn, then thrown away.⁴⁴²

Comstock’s use of “heroes” here should not be seen as a departure from his anti-romantic rhetoric, but rather an ambivalent use of the word that again appears to strike at the heart of civilians’ pronouncements. Comstock levels a similar critique in the final stanza of “Old Pal.” Perhaps a veiled criticism of the continued use of heroic depictions of war in public commemorative efforts, he writes

All honor and glory from war
Are stripped, by those who know,
No luster lurks in the cannon’s roar,

⁴⁴² Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 23.

Nor in the saber's blow.⁴⁴³

Taken together, McCollum's and Comstock's poems offer clear evidence that poetry provided a readier avenue for opinions and emotions that were skeptical or critical of the sanitized vision of war than did the civilian-oriented public memorials.

Howard Swazey Buck also speaks of the dead in realistic terms—most of the time. Although not quite as descriptive as “Le Mort,” mentioned above, “Their Strange Eyes Hold No Glory” nonetheless imparts a less-than heroic depiction of the dead. With diction carrying negative, even haunting, connotations, Buck illustrates the sheer futility of war and its effects in the opening stanza:

Their strange eyes hold no vision as a rule,
No dizzy glory. A still look is theirs,
But rather as one subtly vacant stares
Watching the circling magic of a pool.

The main body of the poem tells of an artilleryman attempting to determine if his battery will be the next one hit by air raids. Rendering the question “meaningless” (like so many things during the war), he drifts into thought, until “Suddenly near the unseen death swoops low,” leaving him “Face down, clutching the clay with warm dead hands.”⁴⁴⁴ Though not in as direct a manner as Comstock, and casting the attacking airplane in far different terms than that poet's “The Skyman,” Buck successfully counters the notion, still held by Americans in 1918, that the war is fought in close quarters with the enemy. Instead of Seeger's glorious confrontation with death, the man in Buck's poem is defenseless, killed by an invisible attacker from above.

⁴⁴³ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 36.

⁴⁴⁴ Buck, *The Tempering*, 62.

On the very next page, however, Buck abandons reality for romanticism. A personal tribute to a close comrade, “Robert Hall, Killed September 12” reiterates (from the previous poem) death’s randomness on the Western Front, but in a far different manner. Speaking of Hall’s death, Buck writes

We knew Death could not always miss
Our lips in his blind, wandering kiss;
And you he touched. Yet not the less
Was it the lightning’s suddenness.

Here, Death is akin to a lover, just as in Seeger’s “I Have a Rendezvous with Death.” The title expresses the poet’s willing “love affair” with Death, with any doubt as to Seeger’s meaning extinguished in the second stanza, where he states

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.⁴⁴⁵

If one looked only at Buck’s social and educational background, his employment of Seeger-like romanticism would not come as a surprise. Placed in the close context of “Their Strange Eyes Hold No Glory” and several other poems analyzed in the next section, however, the contrast is striking, and clear evidence of the existence of a gray area between romanticism and realism in American war literature.

Yet Buck avoids an outright glorification of the dead—and of death. His depiction of Robert Hall “resting here so peacefully, / Mid alien crosses. Row on row...,” while antiquated,

⁴⁴⁵ Buck, *The Tempering*, 63; Seeger, *Poems*, 144.

pales in comparison to Alan Seeger's call in "Ode in Memory of the American Volunteers Fallen for France":

That pious tribute should be given too
To our intrepid few
Obscurely fallen here beyond the seas.

It is also a far cry from Sanger's plea in "For Those Who Died in France:

For those who died in France
By cannon-shell and lance,
Forget not, friend, to pray
That they be truly blest
In their eternal rest
So far away.⁴⁴⁶

Buck's analogy of Death as a lover in "Robert Hall" is also tempered by the suddenness and randomness of his friend's death, an acknowledgment of the reality of war on the Western Front not found in Seeger's poetry. In rendering death poignantly, but avoiding a glorification of it, Buck demonstrates that Seeger's influence had its limits. It is important here to reiterate significance of dates, as the further one moves from 1918, the more likely the dead receive a more balanced tribute and the more likely one is to encounter the living. Time remains an important factor in the next section, which examines soldier poets' portrayal of their wartime experience.

"The Song of the Shells:" Framing the War and the War Experience

For Americans stationed in France, the First World War left a discernable mark, one still visible long after the guns fell silent and they returned to the United States. Regardless of percentage of time spent in the war zone, whether as soldiers in the front lines or supporting personnel in rest areas and hospitals, all witnessed the war's horrific carnage and heard the cries

⁴⁴⁶ Buck, *The Tempering*, 63; Seeger, *Poems*, 170; Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 9.

of the wounded and dying. Thus, it is not surprising that many poems in the volumes under examination in this chapter pertain to the war and the war experience. Despite Henry James's claim that a writer or visual artist need not experience something firsthand to portray it convincingly and with insight, "being there" lends credibility to soldier poets' work, no matter the language or literary technique employed.⁴⁴⁷ Neither a factual presentation of events nor excessive demonstrations of American moral and military might (even in the case of Seeger and Sanger), the seven poets here provide readers (then and now) with an opportunity not only to see the war, but, if the reader is willing, to understand its complex and long-lasting effects.

As a woman serving in the American Red Cross, and later the Army Educational Corps, Amy Robbins Ware experienced the war differently from her male soldier poet counterparts. She cannot write of gas attacks or the gaining of military objectives; her story is one of refugees, of wartime Paris and its environs, holding men's hands as they die, of relocating to different field hospitals across the Western Front. Thus, while Ware's war experience is distinctly female, it also reflects the gender and class neutrality of war. She may be unable to wield or operate the war's many weapon technologies—airplanes, machine guns, artillery pieces—but she witnesses firsthand their impact on the men around her. Recall her words in "Behind the Lines at St. Mihiel," quoted earlier:

They'll be *carried* to us, on that shell-torn road,
Those wrecks of gallant men!
Lord grant that we hold a steady nerve
That we shall not fail them then.

She is also a first-hand observer of what that technology does to French towns within proximity to the front. Her entry from October 30, 1918 includes a photograph with a caption underneath

⁴⁴⁷ Lubin, *Grand Illusions*, 171–72. Lubin devotes an entire chapter to the question of "Being There."

that states, “The town just a wreckage of shell, so you could only find out by asking where it was on these Borders of Hell.”⁴⁴⁸ While not depicting the stark brutality and realistic death of the war, Ware’s photographs, here and throughout the volume, lend an additional vividness to her work.

Unfortunately, the vast scope and narrative detail of Ware’s book prevents a more complete analysis of it, thus it is not possible within the scope of this section to do her work full justice. The intimate and chronologically precise telling of her “adventure” across the sea and back to her home in Minnesota and her inclusion of material traditionally understood as private (journals and letters), however, allows readers to trace her movements, to “see” vividly the war in a way not possible with the six soldier poets.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, *Echoes of France* is not only an important contribution to American war literature, but also serves to dispel any questions regarding women’s ability to effectively and accurately describe war and its tragic effects on soldiers and civilians alike.

Where Ware’s work is a personal transcript of a war experience, Seeger’s and Sanger’s poems on the same subject speak of the war in far loftier, and thus impersonal, tones; characteristic of both men’s views of the war as well as the language they use to describe it. There are, however, two notable exceptions; Seeger’s “The Aisne” and Sanger’s “It is the Young Who Must Atone.” The first, describing the September 1914 Anglo-French counteroffensive in the immediate aftermath of the First Battle of the Marne, is arguably the poet’s single most

⁴⁴⁸ Ware, *Echoes of France*, 51, 72.

⁴⁴⁹ Ware does not explain why she chose this format, why she felt comfortable sharing her intimate thoughts and feelings with a public audience. Given her own background, however—the recipient of a college education and a willing, even sought after, separation from her husband—perhaps she believed publication would not only allow for remembrance of the war, but also lend support to women’s empowerment.

successful poem. Writing with uncharacteristically stoic restraint in the first four stanzas, Seeger speaks of how he and his comrades in the French Foreign Legion

...first saw fire on the tragic slopes
Where the flood-tide of France's early gain,
Big with wrecked promise and abandoned hopes,
Broke in a surf of blood along the Aisne.

In perhaps his least heroic portrayal of war, Seeger depicts the men "In the chill trenches, harried, shelled, entombed," and the winter weather "that made forlorn still / The ravaged country and the ruined town." Though it is impossible for the poet to continue in this vein too long—he writes of winter constellations "gleaming on our bayonets" and "the majesty of strife"—he ends on a surprisingly modest note:

There where, firm links in the unyielding chain,
Where fell the long-planned blow and fell in vain—
Hearts worthy of the honor and the trial,
We helped to hold the lines across the Aisne.

Apart from his romantic transitions, Seeger frames the war experience in concrete and specific terms, with several instances of modest, even unpleasant, language that briefly allows reality to break through the poet's unabashed romanticism. This stands in stark contrast with "The Hosts," where Seeger utilizes full-fledged romanticism in his depiction of the armies:

Mark how their columns surge! They seem
To follow the goddess with outspread wings
That points toward Glory, the soldier's dream.
With bayonets bare and flags unfurled,
They scale the summits of the world
And fade on the farthest golden height
In fair horizons full of light.⁴⁵⁰

Sanger's "It is the Young Who Must Atone," composed in May 1917 while the poet served with the American Ambulance Field Service, frames the war as one begun purposefully

⁴⁵⁰ Seeger, *Poems*, 131–33, 138.

by the older generation of European statesmen and fought by their children. It poignantly illustrates the human cost of war, interjecting mild realism while continuing to rely on antiquated language. The poem begins on an ominous, and accusatory, note:

It is the young who must atone,
Surely the statesmen might have known,
They who plotted a conquest far,
And plunged the nations into war;
Deaf to all but a ruler's choice,
Bending low to a gilded crown
And a foolish prince's leering frown;
Surely the statesmen might have known:
It is the young who must atone.

The focus of the poem, however, is on an American boy who dreams of painting “the city [New York] beside the sea.” Sanger’s idyllic depiction of the city’s landscape as viewed through the boy turned young man’s eyes is suddenly broken as the poem shifts to Europe, and the outbreak of war. The shift is even more shocking given the poet’s complete abandonment of romanticism:

Far away they spoke the word,
Statesmen had decreed it:
War—the cannon now is heard,
Millions march to feed it;
Millions in the prime of life
Down to slaughter going,
Torn and butchered in the strife,
Red—blood—flowing.

The inclusion of Seeger’s “strife” does nothing to soften the blow, especially as Sanger goes on to depict war as “grim,” relentless,” and “blind destroyer of a countless host of men / Whose youthful lives gave such abundant promise / Of glorious fulfillment...” This human tragedy comes home when the young artist, whose paintings of his home environment was “to be his

mission, / His sacred contribution, his message to the world,” joins the army in the wake of America’s declaration of war and is later reported “Killed in action.”⁴⁵¹

The poem is confusing, however, and not simply because of Sanger’s partial departure from his traditional rhetoric. Like Seeger, Sanger perceived the war, and the war experience, through a positive (and patriotic) lens, yet the poem appears to dispel this. Despite its lofty language, it depicts war as a costly affair caused by elder statesmen, who then send millions of young men to fight and die—young men who otherwise might have made valuable contributions to society. The poem is also uncharacteristically (for Sanger) personal, centered on the tragic fate of the American boy-turned young man from Sanger’s own New York City. Only two poems later, however, Sanger writes triumphantly of American soldiers going “on to victory in France:”

On to victory in France
Now our army hosts advance,
Freedom’s call shall make us
 strong,
And although the war is long,
This shall ever be our song:
“Forward march.”⁴⁵²

It is difficult to explain Seeger’s and Sanger’s brief forays beyond their literary comfort zone. Perhaps a particular experience or interaction caused a temporary reevaluation of the war; this is especially true of Sanger, as his poem is far more intimate than Seeger’s. Their inability to permanently shake their commitment to romantic ideals then prevented further introspection, helping to explain the immediate shift back to traditional language. This hypothesis is supported by David Kennedy’s argument regarding American soldiers’ persistent belief in medieval notions of battle and their use of such terminology even after exposure to the realities of the

⁴⁵¹ Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 17–25.

⁴⁵² Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 29. “Freedom’s call” is a reference to Wilsonian ideals.

Western Front, as well as the timeframe in which Seeger and Sanger wrote—i.e. 1918 and earlier. Like the connection between time of publication and dependence on romantic medievalism discussed in an earlier section, so too did dates play a role in how the war and the war experience was framed, Amy Robbins Ware being the exception.

As in the gradual transition from romanticism to realism, Howard Swazey Buck represents the middle ground, publishing *The Tempering* in 1918 yet able to achieve what Seeger and Sanger could not—a more consistently accurate depiction of the war experience. Two such poems, “A Call at Night” and “Night-Work,” describe the difficult and seemingly endless work of ambulance drivers; though this author has not examined Buck’s war record, it is evident from these writings that this was his position within the AEF. As the first poem’s title suggests, Buck and his fellow drivers are awoken in the middle of the night and forced “To lift tired body, stiff and drenched with sleeping,” to retrieve wounded and dying men from the Argonne Forest:

Over those ghostly fields a mile or more.
Then silently the forest’s prison-door
Closes behind us, blotting the last gleam
Of light to guide us. Now all noises seem
Magnified greatly; the road under us
Shifts sickeningly, a passage perilous
In gloom alive with voices; vague, near calls;
Sound as of falling torrent that ne’er falls.

After a time, “stiff, / Especially in the knees, we stand straight-backed,” they leave, unable or unwilling, to assist a fellow ambulance truck stuck in the mire.⁴⁵³ There is an almost numbing rhythm to the poem, as if to echo the dull movements of Buck’s truck itself, traveling back and forth on what is likely an ever-changing, yet consistently ruined, landscape.

⁴⁵³ Buck, *The Tempering*, 43–44.

Buck continues this theme in “Night-Work,” where he provides a more detailed description of the drivers’ travails and the hazardous nature of their work. The intensity, edginess, and horrors of the moment is clear:

Along that lane of soft, uncertain light,
Beacon of dust in a blank sea of night,
Leaning far forward, ears, eyes, hand intent
For sound or sight out of that blackness sent.

...

Now the shriek of “doucement, doucement,”
groan
Of some soft, bleeding, ticketed being, prone
On the slung stretchers swaying hideously,
Till night is kind, that eyes may never see.
Suddenly vague, uncertain noises start
Out of the blackness, stopping the schooled heart:
Stamping patter of endless coming teams,
Voices, a curse, grit of a wheel that seems
Scraping our very hub-cap, shrinking by;
Guns, carriages, munitions, trucks of supply,
Upthundering, sweeping—vulturous wings that swoop
Darkly out of a dream, shadows that stoop
From some grim, vaguely dark, discolored sky.

In the aftermath of this chaotic encounter, the ambulance continues as before, with the final lines echoing the numbing rhythm of “A Call at Night:”

The soft penumbra of the road shifts on
Beneath us; once more on the tingling brain
The motor’s throb sinks like an old refrain.
One of the swaying wounded moans in pain.⁴⁵⁴

Buck’s poem, of the many poems on the war experience in all seven volumes, best epitomizes the bleakness and monotony of the Western Front. From his heart-wrenching description of wounded men’s cries to his characterization of supply trains, the reader is left with

⁴⁵⁴ Buck, *The Tempering*, 46. “Doucement” is French for slowly or gently.

no doubt as to the true conditions experienced by front-line soldiers in France. This is not to say other poets do not speak to the day-to-day conditions, but rather that Buck, by focusing attention on a single night's work, drives home both the hazards and randomness of life at the front, particularly through his inclusion in both poems of ever-present, but often unseen, artillery fire. This is a common occurrence throughout the work of Buck, but also Hervey Allen, Lee Charles McCollum, and Byron Comstock. If this small writing sample is indicative of the larger whole, than artillery (and technology more broadly) factors predominantly in the minds (and memories) of soldiers' World War I experiences. And rightly so; even for those with only cursory knowledge of the First World War, images of a stark, shell-torn landscape often resonate the strongest. Even soldiers not stationed directly at the front understood, and lived in fear of, the sudden deadliness of an artillery barrage.

Among the poets mentioned above, Hervey Allen addresses the subject of artillery in the least militaristic manner, emphasizing the guns' impact not on soldiers, but on French civilians. For the people of northeastern France, caught in the deadly cross-fire between Allied and German positions, escape from shellfire proved difficult, with the leveling of countless towns across the region leaving thousands dead, destitute, and homeless. Allen alerts readers to civilians' plight in "The Blindman" and "Doomed." In the first, a soldier (presumably American) encounters a blind man,

There crouched a blindman by the wall
A-shivering in a ragged shawl,
Who gave a hopeless parrot screech
And felt the wall with halting reach.
He went around as in a trap.
He had a stick to feel and rap.
A-rap-a-tap, a-rap-a-tap.

Unable to locate the children's school to which he sent his daughter, due to "a blow" that struck the town a week ago, he asks the soldier to guide him "Across the square and down the street." Upon arriving at their destination, they come upon "a sight to raise your hair;" destroyed in the bombardment, the soldier sees

A dusty litter, books and toys,
Three bundles that were little boys,
White faces like an ivory gem;
A statue stood and looked at them.

...

The ceiling lay upon the floor,
And slates, and books, and something more—
The master with a glassy stare,
Sat gory in his shivered chair
And gazed upon his pupils there.

When the blindman asks about his child, the soldier "told the truth I wished to hide:" "I see your Eleanor / And she is dead upon the floor." Outside, the war continues unabated; men and horses pass by, "The din of them that go to slay." The war's "meaning," however, is lost on the blindman; when the soldier, in response to the man's query, excitedly speaks of "setting the whole world free" and "sweet democracy," the blindman replies only that "My little Eleanor is dead."⁴⁵⁵

This jarring juxtaposition of the soldier's excitement and the blindman's grief is like Comstock's sarcastic portrayal of "victory" against the backdrop of death in "We Have Won," though Allen's emphasis on personal tragedy resonates in much the same way as Buck's "A Call at Night" and "Night-Work." Like Buck, Allen also continues to develop this theme further in the volume with "Doomed." It describes a French town, "Left to its fate," devoid of residents

⁴⁵⁵ Allen, *Wampum and Old Gold*, 55–58.

through death or abandonment due its position “Between the armies trenched on either hill.” Houses once the home “where peasants led their blameless life” are now “clever traps,” the implication being that soldiers of both armies alternatively take refuge in or are killed in said houses, leaving the buildings “too much like walls about a tomb.” Though at times the landscape appears calm and silent, as if to suggest the worst has passed, this is only an illusion, a fact Allen makes clear in the final line of the poem, where he states that “Tonight the shells will burst upon the town!”⁴⁵⁶

Where Allen minimizes the physical act of shelling in favor of depicting its tragic aftermath, Lee Charles McCollum and Byron Comstock vividly illustrate (as much as is possible through words) the sights, sounds, and colors associated with World War I artillery barrages, in some instances even bestowing human-like characteristics on the deadly weapons. Comstock’s poem “The Song of the Shells,” from which the title of this section draws its name, imagines the spoken word of artillery shells “as they shriek and wail overhead” and “reap their toll of dead.” In a part-mocking, part-menacing tone, the shells cry out to the men in the trenches:

Crawl in your flimsy cover, cower close to the ground,
We’re coming closer and closer, we’re dropping all around.
Blanch with fright at our nearness, tremble there in your fear,
Live again the past, for death is near, is near.

The men are continuously hounded by the shells, who, reflecting the soldiers’ inner fears, state that escape is impossible, that “Some day we’re going to get you, sometime your turn will come.” Comstock makes clear the psychological effects such shelling had on American soldiers when he writes

This is the song of the shells, these are the words they hum,
Till we laugh when we hear them burst, and our brain with the

⁴⁵⁶ Allen, *Wampum and Old Gold*, 61–62.

strain goes numb.⁴⁵⁷

That prolonged exposure to artillery barrages affected soldiers long after leaving France is evident in McCollum's "The Flare." Capitalized throughout the poem, The Flare is a reference to German star shells, used to illuminate the battlefield at night. The poet's fear of night, and what it can bring, is made clear in the first two stanzas:

You who know electric lights,
In cities grand and fair,
Have never felt the fear of night,
Unless you've seen the Flare!

You're all secure altho obscure,
And will never know the fright,
That can be brought upon you,
By the Flare when it's a-light.

He then goes on to describe a soldier's reaction when, out on a raid, the sky is suddenly lit by "Jerries' blue-white Flare!":

For when he shoots the star-shells,
Into the dark drear night,
You're a mark for sniper's shooting,
And you're filled with fear and fright.⁴⁵⁸

Returning to the present at the end of the poem, McCollum expresses what many soldiers likely felt in the years following the war—bewilderment and confusion; that something as simple as a flare put fear in countless men on the Western Front, a fear that did not subside once the guns fell silent in 1918.

For McCollum, however, technology and technological advancements are not always viewed negatively. True to his "boots on the ground" approach, McCollum also points out the

⁴⁵⁷ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 20–21.

⁴⁵⁸ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 40–42.

“friendship” soldiers had with their machinery and equipment. Like in “The Flare,” he bestows human-like qualities on “My Pals” in telling “how they helped me live thru hell.” First, there is “Billy,” his gas mask first used in the Argonne that allowed him to survive over three hours. Second, Jim, “my old ‘diggin’ in’ tool” that “made me war wise in his own quiet way.” And finally, Jack, McCollum’s helmet who “was my one comfort and eternal joy,” serving a multitude of functions, most importantly “for turning the Boches shrapnel” to “keep me from numbering amongst the dead.”⁴⁵⁹ He also speaks highly of the bandolier, a belt containing extra ammunition, allowing it to tout its own praises as the first-person narrator of “The Bandolier.” The poems are perhaps meant as a symbolic “thank you” to the instruments that helped keep McCollum alive, or could be interpreted as a way for the poet to come to terms with having survived a traumatic experience.

However it is depicted, it is clear from McCollum’s and Comstock’s work that technology and the battlefield experience resonated strongly with the two soldiers. The evidence for this lies in their reflective poems, in which they reminisce about their war experience. Both poets’ volumes, but particularly *The Log of the Devil Dog*, contain several such poems, some of which have been discussed in previous sections, a fact that highlights the multi-thematic nature of their writings. Two poems to draw attention to here are Comstock’s “The Vision,” and McCollum’s “Thots!” The former, in line with the Wisconsinite’s literary style, is the one poem of all the poets studied that best captures the horrific nature of First World War military technology, power, and destructiveness. Returning to the battlefield—likely Belleau Wood, given Comstock’s service record and key words in the poem—in his mind, Comstock once again sees and hears the events of that day:

⁴⁵⁹ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 24–25.

For I heard the blasting blight of high explosive shells,
And the terrible mighty roar of distant guns
Mingled with the tearing flesh and sudden stricken yells,
As some brave comrade fell before the Huns.
And trees were torn asunder by that awful man made thunder,
And that peaceful edge of wood became a Hell.
There never was a worse either on the earth or under,
And the gallant chosen of a nation fell.

Then I saw the field of battle, with its torn and twisted dead,
Red glory for another history's page.
And my eyes were filled with tears, and my heart stood still with
dread,
As I looked upon the setting of that stage.
Desolation, devastation, like some weird barbaric song,
I heard a thousand huge shells shriek and scream.
Then, as quickly as the vision appeared, it all was gone,
And the picture that I saw was but a dream.

The vividness with which Comstock remembers the war, and the suddenness with which the vision appeared is a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of the war experience on participants. Casting the war in stark terms—the “tearing flesh” and “twisted dead”—while also employing phrases such as “gallant chosen” and “red glory,” Comstock yet again demonstrates his disdain for the heroic narratives surrounding the conflict. His vision is no happy recollection of his time “Over There,” but one that leaves him emotionally and mentally shaken and resonates with the reader far more than the eloquence of Alan Seeger and those like him. Despite its terrible nature, however, Comstock also sees it as a powerful reminder of the importance of peace. This “silver lining,” if you will, is evident in the poem’s final lines:

Still I felt the vision’s power, and I prayed
That never again might we have cause to suffer and to mourn,
But would hear the fallen as they cried,
Save, oh save the generations yet unborn,
It is the challenge of the millions who have died.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 26–27.

Where Comstock speaks plainly regarding the war's horrors, McCollum directly communicates the difficulties of living with the war experience:

Oh! to get away from it all,
Those war-ridden thots, that come,
To blind forever those memories,
And the sound of the bullets' hum.

To live once more, as I did before,
In peace and quiet and rest;
To just forget for a little while,
That it took from my life the best.

At night, when all is quiet,
And I'm lying alone in bed,
There comes a vision of battlefields,
The fight, the maimed and the dead.

Will I never forget that hell "Over There,"
And the tales the battlefields tell,
Of the price my "Buddies" paid with "their all,"
And the place in which they fell?⁴⁶¹

There is no silver lining here. McCollum is the only soldier poet included in this study to speak in such a manner; even Comstock, with his realistic portrayals of the war experience and questioning tone regarding the meaning of victory, does not write in this way. McCollum's expressions of anxiety over the memory of the war, however, fit with his later poems pertaining to veteran struggles in postwar society, analyzed in the next section. Taken together, McCollum and Comstock best represent the strongest counterpoint to the war narrative articulated by American civilians in their push to create memorials; McCollum because of his overt description of veterans' struggles and sense of isolation, and Comstock because of his willingness to challenge the public's sanitized view of the war and the war experience.

⁴⁶¹ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 52–53.

“After France:” Thoughts of Home and Returning to Civilian Life

In “Sonnet XI,” Alan Seeger speaks of his happiness on returning to the front after leave.

Framing the war positively as compared to the homefront, he writes:

Now turn we joyful to the great attacks,
Not only that we face in a fair field
Our valiant foe and all his deadly tools,
But also that we turn disdainful backs
On that poor world we scorn yet die to shield—
That world of cowards, hypocrites, and fools.⁴⁶²

That he casts the front in more positive light than the world of civilians should come as no surprise. As this chapter has consistently illustrated, Seeger viewed the war and the war experience as the high point of his life, fully willing (even desiring) to die a glorious death on the battlefield. This helps explain the lack of “home” or “civilian life” poems, as the poet clearly did not want to return home from France. Only in poems like “A Message to America” and “Ode in Memory of the American Volunteers Fallen for France,” where Seeger seeks to communicate a particular message to his fellow Americans, does he speak of those back home.

The thoughts expressed in “Sonnet XI” stand at odds with the other six poets examined here, and likely countless other soldiers, American or not, who served during World War I. While many American soldiers felt compelled to serve (through volunteering or answering the draft), and viewed their overseas experience in a generally positive manner, they nonetheless perceived their mission as temporary and longed to return home as soon as the war ended. Even William Cary Sanger, who spoke of war in the same language as Seeger, writes of “A Night in the Future,” devoid of submarines “Watching for its prey” and “the concussion and the tumult of

⁴⁶² Seeger, *Poems*, 155.

the cannonade.”⁴⁶³ For a soldier such as Byron Comstock, in France since late 1917, “the voices of those at home” remained a constant in the heat of battle “when the bullets were singing, / And men dropped here and there with a moan.” Like those who travel for extensive periods of time, Comstock realized that

If I had but a choice of lot
In this vast sea of woe,
If I had but to choose the spot
Where I most want to go.
Tho I must swear an oath most cold,
I never more would roam,
Still would I choose, tho I be old,
That dearest place of all, my home.⁴⁶⁴

Lee Charles McCollum echoes Comstock’s sentiment, writing that

As I stand on this transport here by the rail,
Watching her plow thru the foam;
There’s just one thing I can think about,
And that is, we’re “Going Home.”⁴⁶⁵

Coming home, however, often proved a lengthy process. With military and civilian leaders expecting the war to last into 1919 and possibly 1920, the 1918 armistice caught officials off-guard and ill-prepared to execute a rapid demobilization of the 1.2 million men in France. McCollum’s “Let’s Go!” is reflective of many doughboys’ frustrations at this unexpected and unwanted delay. Speaking of the army’s constant change of plans, he writes how

At first we were going home Christmas,
And then on New Year’s Day;
But now it’s the fifteenth of April,
Unless they change it to May.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶³ Sanger, *With the Armies of France*, 33.

⁴⁶⁴ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 53, 60.

⁴⁶⁵ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 60.

⁴⁶⁶ McCollum, 61. McCollum did not arrive back in the U.S. until July 1919.

Upon finally arriving in New York Harbor, soldiers' excitement was understandably evident, an emotion Howard Swazey Buck conveys well in "New York, New York!" As "one in the khaki-clustered shrouds," he describes the raucous scene:

Our hearts were in the clouds!
O beautiful barges, and sweet ferryboats!
O Brooklyn Bridge! O whistles' ravishing shrieking!
I'm all choked up—you must excuse my speaking.

Although this was certainly a welcome sight, what soldiers truly sought was home:

And home...O good, kind God, most blessed Giver! —
They'll all be down to the station in the flivver!
Mother, it's you! —and Dad, God bless you! Mattie,
And May, Jake, Jane—and Lord, yes—even Hattie!⁴⁶⁷

Returning soldiers soon realized that transitioning from military to civilian life came with difficulties—difficulties that lingered well into the postwar period. It is not surprising that soldier poets such as Buck, Allen, Comstock, and McCollum address this, as veterans themselves, but Amy Robbins Ware's decision to write on the subject is. She makes no reference to home, or thoughts of home, until the final section of the book, composed from July 7, 1919, to October 12, 1920, and then not with relief or happiness, but with trepidation for the soldiers under her care. Although the soldiers themselves board the Army Transport ships "with radiant smiles and with buoyant step," even those "going back maimed for life," and are "so sure of the welcome that 'waits there when they get to the U.S.A.," Ware clearly senses that their return will be quite different from their departure. Writing with evident emotion, she states, "How I wish I could spare them the wakening pain I am bitterly sure will be theirs."⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁷ Buck, *The Tempering*, 69. "Flivver" is a reference to an automobile.

⁴⁶⁸ Ware, *Echoes of France*, 121.

Ware continues in this vein in the poems that follow, where she assumes the voice and perspective of returning soldiers. Now “back in God’s Country,” the soldiers appear perplexed, remarking that the country is not what it was when they left for France:

For something has gone and something has come
In playing war’s intricate game;
And values have altered entirely
So that what was worth while we’d say
In the care free years of our far off youth
Has ceased to exist in some strange way
That is hopelessly hard to explain.

There is almost a slight hint of disillusionment here, that the war did not fulfill the expectations set out in 1917 and for which men went off to fight in France. The poem then shifts tone, with the soldiers writing alternatively of “The Old Girl in the Harbor’s” last look at them, for they will “*Never Again!*” pass this way, and of their dreams and plans once they return to their hometowns. As happy as they are regarding the latter—marrying “my girl,” living in “a bungalow up on the hill,” and obtaining a “corking fine job”—there is also the realization that, due to an amputated leg, “I’ll be no good for dancing now.”⁴⁶⁹ Although the soldier is convinced his girl will stand by him, as she promised before the war, Ware shatters this illusion in the last poem on the subject. Appropriately titled “Vanishing Gold at the Rainbow’s End,” it vividly highlights the situation countless soldiers found themselves in:

My job has been taken by someone
Who said that the “war was all wrong,”
And the Girl, —well, how can you blame her?
If you loved to dance, would *you* want to belong
To a man who’d left one leg in France?

⁴⁶⁹ Ware, *Echoes of France*, 122–25.

Returning to the refrain stated in the previous poem, the soldier now speaks of going “*Back Again!*” to France, implying that there, the wounded and maimed are not “discarded,” that in France, soldiers’ physical sacrifices are accepted and understood.⁴⁷⁰

Ware’s purpose in including such poems is unknown. Given her maternal love for the soldiers under her care, perhaps she felt compelled to illustrate their plight, in the hopes that it might persuade readers to treat veterans kindlier and with the respect she believed they deserved. In this, Ware finds common ground with McCollum, Buck, and Comstock, though they employ a more forceful tone, even sarcastic at times. In his typical simple, yet direct, manner, McCollum cuts right to the heart of the matter in his ironically titled “The Price.” Speaking to a “Pal,” he states:

Now listen here, old Pal of mine,
I’ve fought from the Vesle clear up to the Rhine,
At Chateau-Thierry and in the Argonne Wood,
I did my bit as best I could.

...

I’ve marched to the band and felt mighty proud,
Because I was one of that fighting crowd,
Now I’m back in this land of ours,
And will be in my civies in a few short hours.

The excitement of “Homeward Bound,” however, is now tempered by the reality of what awaits him. Frustration, even a slight bitterness, is evident when he writes:

But, somehow or other it all seems bare,
And I feel like hell when people stare,
For some are thinking of loved ones lost,
And others of how much we’re going to cost.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Ware, *Echoes of France*, 126.

⁴⁷¹ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 62.

The question of monetary compensation was an especially sore subject for returning veterans like McCollum, as they felt that “if the state had the power to draft men, it also had the ability and responsibility to prevent the war from ruining the lives of those it conscripted.” This notion of adjusted compensation, as it became known, proved difficult to navigate in the postwar period, and one with profound social and political consequences.⁴⁷² Veterans’ anger at the government over this issue is evident in McCollum’s poem, with the poet unknowingly predicting the battle that emerged in American society and politics in the final stanza:

And that’s the bunch I’m sore about,
The patriot who was so willing to shout,
Then turn us out when we came home,
On two months’ pay in the world to roam.⁴⁷³

Using sarcasm in lieu of anger and bitterness, Comstock also explores the civilian life that awaits returning veterans in “Snap Out of It.” Comstock’s veteran, turned out on two months’ pay is now living in abject poverty:

You’re down and out, and you know it.
You haven’t the price of a chow.
Your clothes are in rags,
Your lower jaw sags,
But snap out of it—win somehow!

You’ve lost your best friend, maybe true,
And you can’t find a bit of work.
But you never can tell
Till you’ve tried damn well,
Snap out of your hop—don’t shirk!

⁴⁷² Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 6. Keene provides a detailed analysis of the adjusted compensation debate and its consequences (the Bonus March and GI Bill) in chaps. 7, 8, and epilogue.

⁴⁷³ McCollum, *Rhymes of a Lost Battalion Doughboy*, 62.

Despite their desperate situation, soldiers are told to “snap out of it!” a phrase Comstock repeats throughout the poem for added emphasis.⁴⁷⁴ While not directly refuting the call to “snap out of it,” the poem does illustrate the depths to which some veterans have plummeted, and thus the difficulty in climbing back up again. American society likely believed veterans’ troubles an easy fix; “snap out of it” and all will be as before. Comstock’s sarcasm indicates he felt the opposite, that American civilians only felt that way because of their lack of understanding of the war. With the war’s horrors largely concealed from the American public, and the war’s end ushering in celebratory parades, civilians’ grasp of what soldiers truly experienced in France was simply not in line with reality. Comstock’s awareness and frustration with this knowledge gap, though evident throughout his volume, is possibly best expressed in this poem.

A final poem to analyze is Howard Swazey Buck’s “Now That For Ever He Must Go His Ways.” Encompassing elements of McCollum’s and Comstock’s poems, Buck specifically focuses on a severely wounded veteran and the life that now awaits him due to his physical limitations. In the opening lines, Buck outlines the soldier’s appearance and the everyday activities he cannot enjoy:

Now that for ever he must go his ways
With this smooth, shining gash; or, all his days,
Never once leap a curbstone, climb, or swim,
Or dare to flip a train for God knows where,
Or ever ask her now if she could care
Because all that is ended now for him.

Despite such handicaps and outward appearance, Buck implores the reader to

Remember then the things that he has done,
Terribly, but in splendor of all tears,
In hideous shrieks and silence of sick fears,
That this sole, best objective might be won,

⁴⁷⁴ Comstock, *The Log of the Devil Dog*, 59.

And not for self—who gave himself entire.⁴⁷⁵

Though different in tone, Buck speaks to the reader in much the same way as McCollum and Comstock, with all three asking the reader, and the American public generally, to remember the living along with the dead, and to assist in whatever way possible veterans seeking to resume their former lives.

Analyzing the work of seven soldier poets has illustrated how First World War poetry offers a more nuanced, and often more critical, view of the war as compared to the memorials discussed in the first three chapters. While there is some similarity between the romantic poets (like Alan Seeger and William Cary Sanger) and the language used by civilians in promoting the Liberty Memorial, the D.C. War Memorial, and Memorial Stadium, poetry provides readers with a more complex and colorful illustration of the war experience. This is especially true with the work of Buck, Allen, Comstock, and McCollum, all of whom departed from the antiquated tradition utilized in government propaganda. The recovery and analysis of these largely unknown soldier poets' works thus plays an important role in further understanding the complex nature of American memorialization of the Great War.

⁴⁷⁵ Buck, *The Tempering*, 74–75.

Conclusion

On February 27, 2011, Frank Buckles passed away from natural causes at the age of 110. His death generated an outpouring of emotion, with resolutions in the House and Senate calling for his body to lie in state in the Capitol rotunda. Though this did not come to fruition, Buckles's family had secured the federal government's permission in 2008 for the veteran's internment in Arlington National Cemetery.⁴⁷⁶ Following a ceremony at the cemetery's Memorial Amphitheater Chapel, a fitting location given its proximity to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Buckles was laid to rest with full military honors in Section 34, near the grave of AEF commander General Pershing. *Washington Post* reporter Paul Duggan said of the moment: "The hallowed ritual at grave No. 34-581 was not a farewell to one man alone. A reverent crowd of the powerful and the ordinary—President Obama and Vice President Biden, laborers and store clerks, heads bowed—came to salute Buckles' deceased generation, the vanished millions of soldiers and sailors he came to symbolize in the end."⁴⁷⁷

Buckles's generation of veterans may have come to an end, but the fight for the national memorial he sought to commemorate them had only begun. It was a battle born not of the veteran himself, but those whose cause he supported or influenced. In 2008, Arlington lawyer Edwin Fountain founded the World War I Memorial Foundation with the intent of rededicating the D.C. War Memorial as a national memorial, a move that initially had the support of the D.C. Council and D.C.'s non-voting delegate to Congress, Eleanor Norton. At the same time,

⁴⁷⁶ During World War I, Buckles drove ambulances and motorcycles, thus he did not meet the combat requirement for burial in Arlington.

⁴⁷⁷ Paul Duggan, "Frank Buckles, Last Known U.S. World War I Veteran, is Laid to Rest at Arlington," *Washington Post*, March 15, 2011.

Representative Ted Poe (R-TX), having met Buckles and agreeing to take up his call for a national memorial, introduced legislation to create a national World War I memorial in D.C., proposing (like Fountain) that the D.C. memorial be altered for this purpose. Buckles expressed his support for both efforts, and, as illustrated in the opening of this study, later testified before Congress and in public to this effect.

As the analysis of the D.C. War Memorial in Chapter 2 shows, however, building on the National Mall is far from simple, or quick. Despite the public presence and support of the last surviving American veteran of the Great War, the final three years of Buckles's life passed with no congressional decision on the matter. This was not for a lack of effort or interest, but largely out of geographic competition. Poe's legislation died in committee in part because senators Kit Bond and Claire McCaskill of Missouri opposed it out of concern over perceived competition with the Liberty Memorial. Subsequent efforts to rekindle the national World War I memorial legislation, as well as attempts by Missouri's representatives to obtain an official national memorial status for the Liberty Memorial, all failed. Even the first efforts to create the World War One Centennial Commission (WWICC), at this stage centered only on the development of commemorative events and programs for the upcoming centennial rather than overseeing a national memorial, died in committee.

Even after Buckles's death, Congress struggled to make the national memorial proposal a reality, a struggle reflective of the growing public debate in the District. Although District officials initially supported Poe's and Fountain's proposals to rededicate the D.C. War Memorial, opinion had shifted by 2011. Delegate Norton now opposed the redesignation of the memorial, believing the move diminished the District in favor of the federal government. The popular arm of the opposition centered on local groups, especially the Rhodes Tavern-D.C.

Heritage Society. The organization's president, Joe Grano, argued that Pershing Park, located at 15th and Pennsylvania NW (just to the east of President's Park) and named for the AEF commander, made a better site for the proposed national memorial. Edwin Fountain, however, staunchly opposed this recommendation. Echoing the language used by Buckles in 2009–2010, he emphasized the need for any national memorial to be placed on the National Mall, while also disparaging the Liberty Memorial and national museum: "When you put World War I someplace else—whether in Kansas City or Pershing Park—you are diminishing it somehow, saying it was not as profound an event."⁴⁷⁸

The battle lines were clearly drawn. But time was also running out; the centennial was only a few years away, and Congress had yet to authorize either a centennial commission or the proposed national memorial. With this in mind, Representative Poe introduced the World War I Centennial Commission Act in September 2012, which was passed and signed into law by President Obama in January 2013. Simultaneously, Poe reintroduced memorial legislation, something he attempted to partner with the centennial commission act but was removed from the final bill. Now titled the Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act, the bill sought to compromise, giving official national memorial status to the Liberty Memorial while also authorizing a World War I memorial in D.C. As part of an agreement with Delegate Norton, the D.C. War Memorial would not be infringed upon; for her part, Norton would support the construction of a new memorial in D.C. Like its predecessors, this bill was referred to committee and never acted upon.

Near-identical legislation, introduced by Senator McCaskill and Representative Cleaver, both from Missouri, designated the Liberty Memorial as *a* national World War I memorial while

⁴⁷⁸ John Kelly, "D.C.'s WWI Memorial Causes 21st-Century Battle," *Washington Post*, March 31, 2011.

also authorizing a national World War I memorial in D.C., but not on the Mall. Specifically barring any encroachment on the D.C. War Memorial, they called on the centennial commission to oversee the construction of a memorial in Pershing Park, thus winning the support of Delegate Norton and her allies in Congress. The World War I Memorial Foundation, now led by David DeJonge (Fountain joined the centennial commission), bitterly opposed the legislation, advocating for Constitution Gardens instead. Placing the memorial at Pershing Park, DeJonge argued, “will contribute to a systematic extinction to the memory of World War I,” a statement that seems slightly melodramatic given the attention paid to the conflict in recent years. Nonetheless, Poe agreed to support the new legislation over his own, paving the way for congressional approval. Inserted into the 2015 defense bill, the memorial legislation passed both houses and was signed into law by President Obama in December 2014.⁴⁷⁹

With congressional authorization finally in hand, the WWICC could now begin the design process. They sought to select the winning design by January 2016 and hold a groundbreaking ceremony on Veterans Day 2017. Though this proved an accurate timeline, the commission encountered several hurdles along the way, not the least being a failure to consider the existing historical significance of Pershing Park. This perhaps unintentional oversight caused the commission a great deal of difficulty, as the designs of the five finalists (and the sentiment of the commission) called for a complete remodeling of the space. The original architect of the space, M. Paul Friedberg, expressed shock and outrage over not being consulted about the new plans, and landscape architects rallied to his support, calling for the park’s addition to the

⁴⁷⁹ Nikki Schwab, “World War I Memorial Get a Take Two,” *U.S. News and World Report*, August 13, 2014. In discussing the development of the national World War I memorial idea from 2008–2014, I have simplified a complex and lengthy narrative. To do it full justice would require a chapter of its own, something I plan to do in the future.

National Register of Historic Places.⁴⁸⁰ The commission also ran afoul of the Commission of Fine Arts, whose approval, as discussed in Chapter 2, is required before construction can begin. While supporting the overall purpose, CFA Secretary Thomas Luebke stated, in part, that “The [Commission of Fine Arts] members observed that the competition designs appear to proceed from the underlying assumption that the existing park design is a failure, whereas its problems are the direct result of inadequate maintenance...[the CFA] criticized the competition program for understating the value and importance of the existing park design, and they encouraged conceiving of the project as a new memorial within an existing park.”⁴⁸¹

Thus, despite sticking to their original timeline (the winning design was selected in January 2016 and the groundbreaking ceremony held in November 2017), at this writing the commission is no closer to completing the new national memorial. A meeting with the CFA as recently as February 2018 met with positive reactions regarding the updated design, but final approval is still on hold.

The entire project, then, would seem tinged with a bittersweet feeling. The national memorial Frank Buckles sought is going forward, but not in the location he (and others) desired. The WWICC is firmly committed to building the memorial at Pershing Park, yet the World War I Memorial Foundation appears unwilling to abandon the idea of a memorial on the Mall, going so far as to seek presidential intervention via the Antiquities Act to achieve placement at

⁴⁸⁰ Carlos Bongioanni, “Plans for WWI Memorial in Nation’s Capital Stir Ire,” *Stars and Stripes*, August 19, 2015.

⁴⁸¹ Kriston Capps, “Pershing Park Wins a Big Endorsement in WWI Memorial Debate,” *Washington City Paper*, December 2, 2015. Although I am only quoting the CFA here, the memorial design also had to win approval from the National Capital Planning Commission, an organization that like the CFA, traced its origins to the early twentieth century and initial development of the Mall.

Constitution Gardens.⁴⁸² Regardless of which side of the debate on which one stands, it seems highly unlikely that any new memorial will be completed in time for the centennial in November 2018, as has always been the goal. This leads one to wonder whether interest and support for a national World War I memorial can be sustained once the centennial passes, and if not, if there ever will be such a structure.

Although perhaps still far from completion, the new memorial has undertaken an interesting journey to get to this point. It begs comparison with the three memorials examined in this study, all of which encountered setbacks and hurdles that delayed their completion. The new memorial's struggles bear a special similarity to the D.C. War Memorial, which, as Chapter 2 illustrated, took five years to receive congressional authorization and another seven before being dedicated. While much of this delay pertained to its location on the Mall, and thus the need for a specific aesthetic look, the memorial also suffered from slow funding, a hurdle not limited to memorials in D.C. Kansas State University's inability to raise sufficient funds in a relatively efficient manner resulted in Memorial Stadium's piecemeal construction and the ultimate abandonment of the original design. This prevented the university from formally dedicating the stadium until April 2017, a ceremony that did not do justice to the postwar efforts of the college community to make the memorial a reality. Even the Liberty Memorial, the most successful memorial in terms of funds raised and overall building process, witnessed unexpected construction delays and artistic differences regarding the north wall frieze, the latter not completed until the 1930s.

⁴⁸² The home page of the foundation's website features the headline, "Honor Will Die at Pershing Park," and in two photographs, contrasts the "dilapidated" Pershing Park with the grandeur of the National Mall.

It is not just the design and building process of the new memorial that bears comparison to the past, however. Advocates of the new memorial, and those who hosted the centennial events in 2017, also use strikingly similar language to that employed by the three memorials' supporters in the interwar period, as well as the antiquated language used by soldier poets such as Alan Seeger and William Cary Sanger. On their website, the WWICC states that "now is the time to honor the heroism and sacrifice of the Americans who served"; though tastefully executed, the signature centennial event, sponsored by the commission and hosted by the national museum in Kansas City, was titled "In Sacrifice for Liberty and Peace."

Perhaps this is unavoidable. Perhaps such terminology is so embedded in American military culture that it is impossible to commemorate such events without using this language. However, this study has shown it *can* be done. One need only look at the work of Byron Comstock and Lee Charles McCollum to know this is true. Their work demonstrates that it is not necessary to use romanticized language to remember fallen comrades, that the war experience alters a person psychologically, and perhaps physically, but this does not—indeed, should not—make him less worthy of remembrance than those who died in France. There is also the example of the D.C. War Memorial, which, despite the use of traditional rhetoric in public campaigns, remembered veterans as well as those who died. In that case at least, the appropriation of the dead to serve the purposes of the living was kept to a minimum.

Many Americans and organizations today may feel like the First World War is a "forgotten" war, lost in the shadow of both the Civil War and World War II. This study, however, has illustrated the opposite. Though lacking a national memorial along the lines of Vietnam, Korea, and World War II, the war witnessed an outpouring of memorialization in the years following the armistice. From a small town in Kansas to a Midwestern meatpacking city to

the nation's capital, Americans built memorials to the men and women from their communities who served and died in World War I. That they did so for both commemorative and civic reasons is not cause for judgment but rather illustrates the complex nature of remembrance, then and now. Soldiers too sought to commemorate their war experience, using words instead of architecture. The poetry analyzed in this study provides a more nuanced look into Great War memorialization, showing the reader a piece of the war not visible in the static memorials. Though different, even competing, methods of commemoration, taken together they give a more complete picture of American memorialization to World War I than if studied individually. An interdisciplinary approach to understanding commemorative efforts during the interwar period is thus vital to understanding the war and its legacy.

Memorial mania continues to play a role in American culture today. It is not just the new national memorial that illustrates this, but the existence of efforts to commemorate Desert Storm and the War on Terror. Far from the community-oriented memorials after World War I, current memorial culture dictates that such structures *must* be placed on the National Mall, that the Mall alone is symbolic of "national." But congressional legislation since 2008 complicates this. In authorizing a new national memorial to World War I, Congress also bestowed national status on both the Liberty Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial, a characterization that detracts from their original purpose as local memorials. Thus, there are now technically *three* national memorials to the First World War. Whether this complicates, more than complements, the history of the war as well as the histories of the individual memorials remains to be seen.

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