

Carroll History Journal

Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE CARROLL COUNTY HOME FRONT DURING WORLD WAR I

BY MARY ANN ASHCRAFT

Europe must have seemed as far away in 1917 as Iraq and Afghanistan do today, but the people of Carroll County rallied whole-heartedly to support the massive U.S. war effort between April 1917 and November 1918. Thanks to the Historical Society of Carroll County's acquisition of the J. Leland Jordan Collection in 1955, we have access to manuscripts, pictures, posters, and letters which reveal what was happening locally during that turbulent period.

World War I broke out late in the summer of 1914 and made headlines in Westminster's two newspapers, the *Democratic Advocate* and the *American Sentinel*. However, it was only the *Union Bridge Pilot* which published actual photos of the early action. Slowly, the war in Europe faded from the front pages and even the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 only appeared on the inside pages, in part because the event wasn't published for days in the weekly papers.

In the spring of 1916, while the war raged in France, Company H, First Maryland Infantry, 29th Division, the local unit of the Maryland National Guard, departed for the Mexican border to halt Pancho Villa's raids onto American soil. Carroll County men thus saw a bit of military action but returned home



The men of Company H received a rousing send-off when they departed Westminster for service on the Mexican border on June 21, 1916.

late that fall and resumed their normal lives. In April 1917, however, everything began to change. The men of Company H would go overseas and experience a very different kind of action. President Wilson addressed the American people that month:

The entrance of our own beloved country into the grim and terrible war for democracy and human rights which has shaken the world creates so many problems of national life and action which call for immediate consideration and settlement. . . . To do this great thing worthily and successfully we must devote ourselves to the

service without regard to profit or material advantage and with an energy and intelligence that will rise to the level of the enterprise itself.

Local men, women, and children sprang into action, usually working under the banners of two large organizations that aimed to coordinate activities: the American Red Cross and the Council of Defense. Initiatives by individuals and other groups were also part of the overall effort.

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

Before America's direct involvement in the war, Carroll women were already knitting and sewing for civilians and soldiers abroad. The Carroll County Red Cross Chapter was established on June 17, 1917. Westminster real estate investor George Albaugh immediately offered free space to serve as headquarters for Carroll's various war efforts including the Red Cross. Ten Red Cross branches and seven auxiliaries sprang up across the county, and soon raw materials were being purchased, sewing machines set up, and volunteers organized. Men and women were appointed to chair committees such as "Packing and Shipping," "Finance," "Knitting," and "Military Relief." Each week throughout the war an Executive Committee met to receive whatever local goods had been produced, pack them up and ship them off. The goods ranged

AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS CHRISTMAS MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

10,000,000 NEW MEMBERS BY CHRISTMAS EVE.

CARROLL COUNTY'S ALLOTMENT

TANEYTOWN	DISTRICT 400	HAMPSTEAD	DISTRICT 362
UNIONTOWN	" 327	FRANKLIN	" 183
MYERS	" 284	MIDDLEBURG	" 164
WOOLERY	" 450	NEW WINDSOR	" 307
FREEDOM	" 320	UNION BRIDGE	" 227
MANCHESTER	" 534	MT. AIRY	" 223
WESTMINSTER	" 968	BERRETT	" 279

Are YOU a MEMBER ? Is YOUR WIFE a Member ?

Detail from an advertisement for the Red Cross Christmas membership drive,
Democratic Advocate, December 14, 1917.

from sweaters and socks to surgical dressings, but tons of used clothing for refugees were also gathered within the county.

Only once, at the very outset of the war effort, did Carroll's Red Cross chapter fail to meet its goal. From then on, citizens dug deep into their pockets, their cupboards, and their hearts, and responded with generosity to multiple calls for volunteers or donations of items, time, or money. Local membership in the Red Cross reached a peak of over 17,000 in 1918, about half the county's population. The Carroll County chapter led all others in the Potomac Division in membership at the time of the 1917 and 1918 Christmas Roll Calls and was



Red Cross poster urging Americans to volunteer an hour a week for their country.



Red Cross holiday stamp clipped by Pvt. Harry Hunter from a letter sent to him by Lena Barnes. Hunter marked the back of the stamp "Dec. 8 - 1919 A.E.F. Longchamps."

considered a "banner" chapter. Some local family names associated with these successful efforts included Gorsuch, Cunningham, Wantz, Reifsnider, Herr, Baile, Woodward, Shriver, Mather, Thomas, Davis, Galt, Albaugh, and Kimmey. But it was not just influential members of the community who rose to answer the call. People of all ages and walks of life were committed to the war effort and some continued to help after it was over, although Red Cross membership dropped dramatically from 1919 onward.

THE COUNCIL OF DEFENSE FOR CARROLL COUNTY

In urging Red Cross membership locally and presenting the need for county-wide coordination of efforts, Carroll's leaders of the Council of Defense "laid the foundation for the education of the people as to the needs of the war and brought home the necessity of the co-operation of each and every individual." Local physician Henry M. Fitzhugh served as chairman of the Council and, with a small leadership team, oversaw a wide variety of activities including the Liberty Loan and United War Work campaigns. Working under the leaders were over one hundred men from the fourteen election districts. These volunteers put the federal government's directives into effect, encouraging enlistment and financial support of the war while discouraging waste, idleness, and anti-American sentiments.

By late 1917, many of the original local leaders of the Women's Section of the Council of Defense had resigned, so Maryland governor Emerson C. Harrington appointed Hilda Shriver (wife of Robert Sargent Shriver and mother of Sargent Shriver, the first Director of the Peace Corps) to lead that section. She served for the remainder of the war alongside

energetic assistants, including some of the original workers who returned to the volunteer ranks. Each month she traveled to Baltimore for meetings with representatives from other counties and conducted local meetings with leaders from the election districts to coordinate their various efforts.

M. Madeline Shriver chaired the Departments of Thrift and Women in Industry within the Women's Section which arranged for county-wide demonstrations of canning, cheese making, and meat substitutes by representatives from the Maryland State College Agricultural Extension Department and the County Agent. "War gardens were encouraged and public interest so aroused that back yards fairly blossomed forth with delicacies for the table." At a meeting on August 6, 1917, the presiding officer estimated "a thousand lots and back yards are planted in garden produce in Westminster." During the war years there were 17 companies in the county



United States Food Administration advertisement, *Democratic Advocate*, September 13, 1918.

canning large quantities of locally-grown corn, peas, and other produce for consumption at home and abroad.

Marie Unger headed the Department of Education in the Council's Women's Section. Patriotic instruction was the dominant theme in the public schools of Carroll County during the war. Children were taught to

salute the flag, and patriotic books and pamphlets were widely distributed. Liberty bonds were purchased by several schools. The Junior Red Cross, recruiting within the schools, enrolled 5,383 members representing four fifths of the school population. Members made over three thousand articles for the soldiers, sailors, and refugees, sewed over four thousand miscellaneous pieces, and assembled 650 scrapbooks, in addition to raising money for the Belgian Relief Fund. A report filed at the end of the war acknowledged the "tireless efforts and co-operation of the teachers."

An outgrowth of the Department of Education was concern for less fortunate local children. They received food and clothing as well as much-needed health care. Children under age six were weighed, and the importance of child welfare, physical exams and public health nurses emphasized during the war years as never before.



Carroll County Junior Red Cross members, 1918.

Ada Fulton, Supervisor of Colored Schools for Carroll County, conducted clubs and gave demonstrations to members of the county's small but active African-American population. As a result of her work, a knitting class was organized, nearly fifty-five hundred quarts of vegetables and fruits prepared, and over a hundred gallons of fruit dried.

A Motor Messenger Service began in the spring of 1918 to "provide free motor service during the continuance of the war" for volunteers. Transportation to meetings around the county and in Baltimore and assistance with door-to-door canvassing were offered by car owners who drove their own vehicles and generously provided gasoline. People who used the service were reminded to make arrangements in advance, be on time, take less-expensive trains when possible, and show members of the Motor Messenger Service "a little consideration."

Carroll County Blood Reddens The Soil Of France!

The casualty lists from over there are beginning to bring saddening and thrilling announcements to Carroll County homes.

Our boys are fighting like heroes over there. They are dying like men. They are suffering without complaint. Some have made the supreme sacrifice. Others are writhing on hospital cots.

The money you subscribed last Spring for the Red Cross is now being expended to put new life into the wounded---to nurse them back to health and vigor, that they may go on again, and help to finish the job we have undertaken. The money given then you count now as a good investment.

The money Carroll County is asked to give now, for the

UNITED WAR WORK CAMPAIGN

Detail from an advertisement for the United War Work Campaign of November 11-18, 1918, that appeared in *The Times* on November 8th.

Recruitment of young women for nurses' training was another aspect of the Council of Defense. Twenty-five-year-old Dorothy Elderdice, whose brother Hugh was serving overseas, wrote letters hoping to enroll eligible women over age 19 in the nursing program and asked ministers to appeal for volunteers from their pulpits. Many young women were already married with children, but Carroll County ultimately contributed eight nurses, among them Mary Clementine Koontz of Baust's Church and Eliza Roberts Birnie and Julia Rebecca Smith of Taneytown.

Publicity for the Women's Section of Carroll's Council of Defense was handled by Mary Clemson. Volunteers needed recognition for their efforts so Mary sent articles and pictures of women engaged in Council work to local and Baltimore newspapers. At one point she complained to Matilda B. Maloy, Secretary of the state Women's Section, "[When] a little town of 3800 inhabitants takes the trouble to provide a generous hot supper for cold, hungry soldiers, numbering ninety-six...and an account is sent to a paper that is supposed to solicit country subscribers, they might take a little trouble to put some notice in their paper." While some aspects of the civilian war effort did not always function perfectly, surviving documents indicate that cooperation and efficiency were generally very good.

Early in November 1918, as the war was drawing to a close, President Wilson asked Americans to raise over \$170 million through the United War Work Campaign. Carroll County's share was \$33,500. Fund raisers in every election district were, according to campaign literature, expected to "go over the top and keep on going, just like our boys do in France. Don't stop until the last man is seen." Because health officers had recently banned

public meetings due to the reappearance of the deadly Spanish flu, donations could only be solicited by going house to house. The week-long campaign began at 9 a.m. on the Monday, November 11th, before news of the Armistice had reached the county, and every bell, whistle, and horn was expected to sound for the kickoff.

Even as they celebrated the war's end that momentous week, residents responded to the call. Each night the incoming funds were tallied, and it became apparent that the goal would easily be reached. Some people who could not contribute money promised to contribute poultry, fruit, livestock, or other goods. Westminster held an auction of those donated items which turned out to be a huge success, netting over \$1,300. The November 22, 1918, issue of Carroll County's *Times* described the festivities:

The committee arranged a cavalcade of gaily decorated trucks bearing the livestock and other articles to be sold followed by the liberty bell ringing and the one pound gun in charge of C. Fisher Wantz firing at intervals of a few minutes. . . .

When the parade reached Belle Grove Park a crowd had gathered that occupied the entire area of the square. . . . Mayor [Howard] Koontz

welcomed the people...and Guy Steele, Esq. stated conditions and terms of sale.

Mr. King was asked to describe the cow and calf he donated . . . and [he] closed with a strong appeal for a liberal spirit and support of the campaign. . . . Other sales were made rapidly and almost every article was redonated from one to a dozen times and the gun had to be fired so often that the ammunition was exhausted.

The muskrat skins given by the orphan boy [Howard Knott or Knox] who had no money to give but wanted a part in this splendid work were sold 13 times and totaled \$35.70 cash. The last purchaser, Mr. S. C. Stoner, gave the skins back to the boy.

OTHER ACTIVITIES ON THE HOME FRONT

In addition to raising money, making clothing or surgical dressings, and growing and preserving their own food, some local people turned their energies to the arts. Dorothy Elderdice, who loved theatricals, wrote and directed a pageant performed on the Court House lawn in July 1918 entitled "In the Cause of Freedom." She enlisted the acting and musical talents of over a hundred local residents in her production, which attracted a large, enthusiastic audience.

Episode I of the pageant took place in the early summer of 1914: "Humanity and her children are happily dancing the hours away." In Episode II, "Suddenly their games are rudely interrupted by the clash of arms. Refugees, pursued by War, Famine, Pestilence and Death flee to Humanity for help. Humanity appeals [to] Justice and she holds the enemy at bay while her aides summon in the nations of the world." The pageant ended when "the Spirit of '76 and the Spirit of '61 usher in the Spirit of Freedom, under the shadow of Old Glory." Although the melodrama might seem excessive to an audience today, the pride in America's role and the message were loud and clear.

A special war exhibition train rolled into Westminster in October 1918 to acquaint people on the home front with the "wonders of the war." The exhibits included a variety of items captured from German troops like camouflaged 75 millimeter machine guns, "Hun" helmets, rifles, bayonets, gas masks, and grenades. There were also weapons of the Allied troops such as a French long-range gun. An article in the *Democratic Advocate* of October 11 described the train as "bearing trophies from a dozen hardfought fields of France."

With so many local men off at the war, the county kept a list of volunteer farm workers who could step in to help. The list included days and times when men were available, their employers, and whether they owned a car. Amos Smelser of Stonersville reported that a neighbor had been drafted who "does not leave any one to take care of his wheat crop." Carl Twigg, who lived on Bond Street in Westminster, was on the volunteer list and willing to work any time called upon. He even had his own car. Paul T. Bond, employed at the Post Office until July 15th, also volunteered his services. The Lumber, Coal & Supply Co., under the directorship of George Albaugh, offered to release one or two of its employees each day for farm work.

Several years after the war was over, Guy Steele, a local attorney who had participated in many Council of Defense activities, wrote a report detailing Carroll County's civilian war efforts:

Opera, Tuesday, Dec. 4.

Red Cross Benefit

MARY PICKFORD IN

“The Little American”

THIS is the only chance to see the World's Best Actress in her latest Photoplay. **ONE NIGHT ONLY.**

Matinee 2 P. M. Night 7 P. M. Admission 10c, 20c. War Tax 11c, 22c.

BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW AT BOX OFFICE.

WHAT THEY WROTE

The Historical Society's Manuscript Collection includes many letters sent home during the war. Here are two that illustrate some of the news family and friends received. Lieutenant Lloyd Diehl Schaeffer, an aviator who flew with the 66th Escadrille, a French squadron, was shot down and severely wounded August 29, 1918, but returned to Westminster after months of care in various hospitals. He was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* medal by the French government.

Navy Printer Francis Hunter wrote to his younger brother, Harry ("Cap"), while serving on a troop transport where he got a first-hand look at the condition of soldiers returning from the battlefields. Cap eventually joined the army and served overseas as a private in the 311th Machine Gun Battalion. Both Hunter boys, like Schaeffer, returned home.

[France, c. July 15, 1918]

Dear Mother,

Just to tell you that while the big drive is on and we are fighting like h---, I am still all right. We go over the lines every day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. Recently we patrolled "No Man's Land" at a very low altitude and had an exciting battle with seven Fokker triplanes. I was fortunate again to get off without a scratch. It was an exciting trip. I never expected to see so much of the battle in an actual advance. There were about 100 machines in the bunch, and it seems we must have wiped out a division, as our bombs looked like rain falling, and it would seem impossible to escape them, as we covered miles.

We had orders to bomb at a very low altitude this morning and carried a full load of bombs. Just before we reached the lines (we were then about 5,000 feet high) we ran into clouds, and while coming down we struck a Hun patrol and the best fight I have seen yet took place. We beat them off and kept on down, when we ran into anti-aircraft guns, which started to shoot, and shrapnel kept bursting all around us until we reached our object. We then returned to our base safely after we dropped tons of bombs on troops massed below, and arrived home with 30 holes in my plane.

Lloyd



2nd Lt. Lloyd Diehl Schaeffer, U.S. Army Air Service, France

United States Ship Madawaska
Apr. 11 - 18

Dear Cap,

I got both your letters this morning, we just got in yesterday. We are in Newport, Va. now but don't know if we will take troops aboard here or not. I think we are only going to stay on this side about a week as they are not taking time to do much repair work. I think we will go to "Bordeaux" this trip and I hope we do as it is much larger than St. Nazaire. It is in Southern France. I suppose you are pleased with the new home as it makes a little to the life. I don't know just where Madison Ave. is so when you write tell me where the house is and whether it is old or new, pretty or ugly, and whether you have a bathroom and lights or not. I hope you didn't pass the examination you were going to take in Frederick because you really don't know what this war is until you see some of it or at least the effects of it. We brought a lot of soldiers back with us and they were crippled and had frozen feet from the trenches and some were crazy from what they call being shell shocked. We were in France when the Germans fired the big long range guns on Paris and some of the Officers were in Paris at the time and said that all the business places were all closed up for awhile. The papers over there had big headlines about it the first few days. Hoping to hear from you real soon.

Francis

Receipt issued to Harry C. Hunter for his contribution to the Second Red Cross War Fund drive in 1918.

Pot. Div.
Solicitors' Receipt **A 9261** May 24th 1918

THE NATIONAL WAR FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
AMERICAN RED CROSS

acknowledges with thanks, the receipt of \$ 5.00
which you have generously contributed to the **SECOND RED CROSS WAR FUND.**

O. J. Gilbert
For Local War Finance Committee

To Harry C. Hunter
Green St
Westminster Md

I am amazed that we were able to accomplish so much, and possibly appreciate more now, than I did then, what we did. . . . Carroll County's part was really wonderful – as a purely agricultural community, with no millionaires, its showing could be large only by all taking part; and all did take part; and we can modestly say that our work was not mean. It is hard to believe today that but a little over two short years ago the people of this County thought only of self-denial for the benefit, not only of their own, but for suffering humanity wherever found.

Carroll County sent her sons gladly, over a thousand of them, to the front, but their prowess in service was equaled by the energy and sacrifices of their folks back home, and our children should remember that America, if she did or did not win the war, at least ended it, and this work was accomplished only by reason of the united support given it by her civilian population.

ENDNOTE

J. Leland Jordan was a World War I veteran, newspaper editor and avid collector of items relating to Carroll County and its history including photographs, manuscripts, posters, letters, pamphlets and detailed records of Carroll County men who served in the Great War. After his death, the valuable collection was purchased from his estate and given to the Historical Society of Carroll County for safekeeping.

In 1993, Jay Graybeal, Curator of the Historical Society, compiled *Carroll County and the Great War for Civilization, 1917-1919* which thoroughly covers additional aspects of World War I as it affected the county and her citizens. The illustrated, 200-page book is available for purchase at The Shop at Cockeys.

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