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NEWS FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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New Publication Explores New Hampshire and the Great War

CONCORD, NH--On the 100th anniversary of World War I, the Great War is finally getting its due. The First World War has been nearly a forgotten war in the United States, where it is often viewed as a precursor to World War II and nothing more. This year's centennial commemoration of America's entry into the War to End All Wars prompted a national reexamination of the conflict and yielded some surprising results, for both New Hampshire and the nation. The New Hampshire Historical Society continues its exploration of the war's impact on the Granite State with a special issue of its flagship publication, *Historical New Hampshire*, published in November.

This 80-page, richly illustrated magazine offers readers a comprehensive overview of New Hampshire during the First World War, covering both the home front and the fighting front. An introduction by MIT Professor Christopher Capozzola, fresh from his appearance on PBS's recent documentary "The Great War," sets New Hampshire's wartime experiences in the larger context of this period in American history. Capozzola is the author of *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of Modern America*, a book that argues how profoundly the First World War shaped American life. That idea

is supported by the articles in this magazine about the war's impact on the Granite State.



The magazine's primary article, "Under a Foreign Flag: Concord Men in Foreign Service during World War I," was written by independent historian Byron O. Champlin and presents the harrowing stories of New Hampshire men who served with foreign military forces, primarily between 1914 and 1917 before America entered the fray. Thousands of Americans felt duty-bound to volunteer for the Canadian, British, French, Italian, and even German military during these years. Champlin's work to document the service of the "boys" from Concord provides a

window into wartime experiences that few Americans shared, as the men confronted devastating trench battles, gas attacks, and all the horrors of mechanized warfare in some of the war's fiercest battles, such as the Second Battle of Ypres in the spring of 1915.

New Hampshire's contributions to the war effort did not end with the Concord boys, though. A series of fifteen essays in this special issue covers many facets of the Granite State during this period, from colorful characters like the purple-cloaked relief worker Sister Beatrice to the implacable politician George Higgins Moses who was determined to keep America out of the League of Nations in the postwar world. In large and small ways, people from New Hampshire played an outsized role in helping shape the conflict on European battlefields, in the halls of Congress, and in American living rooms.

New Hampshire sent nearly 9,000 men to fight in Europe, most of them with the famed Yankee Division, which was the longest-serving American division in France. The Granite State produced pioneers in the field of aerial combat, men who would help determine the nature of warfare for generations to come. It organized lumberjacks to go to Scotland and log the timber that was so critical to sustaining the Allied war effort,

with its need for trench supports, railway ties, and stretchers for the wounded. It contributed nurses and relief workers who put themselves in danger to provide aid to those fighting in Europe on both sides of the conflict. It sacrificed lives to German U-boats when New Hampshire residents were lost on the *Lusitania*. And New Hampshire claimed one of the great heroes of the war, Private First Class George Dilboy, who was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism. By war's end, nearly 100,000 Granite State men had registered for the draft, confronting the possibility that they would leave the familiar byways of New Hampshire for the unknown terrors of what seemed to be an all-consuming war on the other side of the Atlantic.

The New Hampshire home front changed rapidly and dramatically during the conflict as well, as Americans organized to fight their first total war, which would impact nearly every aspect of society. World War I brought an unprecedented expansion of federal power into Americans' lives as the government mobilized millions of men, regulated food production, boosted industrial output, maintained a massive workforce, monitored dissent, and raised millions of dollars through public loans. But these federal programs were enacted at the state and local level, adapted and implemented for a population that was unused to following directives from Washington. The government built public support for these efforts by the aggressive use of propaganda posters created by federally commissioned artists who drew on the practices recently developed in advertising to influence American morale and behavior. This special issue is illustrated by many World War I posters from the Society's own collection created by noted artists of the day.

The years from 1914 to 1918 marked a tumultuous period in American history that would have long-lasting impacts on life in New Hampshire and the nation. World War I prompted Americans to re-evaluate their identity as Americans and define what values the country stood for, which loyalties were most important to them, and what sacrifices they were prepared to make to protect a way of life that seemed to be disappearing before their very eyes. By every measure, the people of New Hampshire played their

part in redefining what it means to be an American, and they contributed more than their fair share of men, materiel, money, and leaders.

Historical New Hampshire is a benefit of membership in the New Hampshire Historical Society, and all members will receive a copy by mail in November. Copies are available for purchase in the Society's online store or by calling 603-228-6688.

Founded in 1823 the New Hampshire Historical Society is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to saving, preserving, and sharing New Hampshire history. Nowhere will you find a more extensive collection of objects and archives related to New Hampshire's history. The Society shares these vast collections through its research library, museum, website, publications, exhibitions, and youth and adult educational programs. The Society is not a state-funded agency. All of its programs and services are made possible by membership dues and contributions. For more information about the Society and the benefits of membership, visit nhhistory.org or call 603-228-6688.