

THE PALIMPSEST

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A Year to Remember — 1917

Fifty years have passed since the momentous hour when President Woodrow Wilson delivered his War Message to Congress in April of 1917. This was followed immediately by Congress declaring War, plunging the Nation into one of the bloodiest conflicts in American history. Up to this time Iowans, like other Americans, had remained either neutral or had sided with one or the other of the belligerents. The tendency of Iowans to lean toward neutrality might be demonstrated by the fact that citizens of this normally Republican State had been lulled by the reassuring slogan "He Kept Us Out of War" and voted with the Nation to re-elect Wilson in 1916.

The writer can remember, as a newsboy for the *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald* between 1912 and 1917, the large headlines, in both red and black ink, that almost daily emblazoned the front page of his papers — from Sarajevo through the sinking of the *Lusitania* to the dramatic moment when the United States declared war on Germany and her Allies.

Thereafter, as a high school student, he can recall his experiences as a Four Minute Speaker, the "Meatless" and "Wheatless" days, the Thrift Stamps, Liber-

ty Bond campaigns, and all the activities associated with American efforts to win the war.

Too young to enter the armed forces, either as a volunteer or a draftee, he graduated from Dubuque high school in 1920, entered the University of Dubuque a year later, and after graduation in 1926, began graduate work at the University of Iowa. It was while engaged in his graduate studies that he first learned of the State Historical Society's work on World War I. He was impressed with the long list of valuable historical publications that had appeared over the years and marveled at the scholarly histories produced in the first decade following World War I. As early as 1918, for example, the Society had begun a diminutive magazine entitled IOWA AND WAR, which appeared in 24 consecutive monthly numbers. The following eight numbers dealt expressly with World War I:

No.	Title	Date
15	<i>The First Three Liberty Loans in Iowa.</i>	September, 1918.
16	<i>Social Work at Camp Dodge.</i>	October, 1918.
17	<i>Organized Speaking in Iowa During the War.</i>	November, 1918.
18	<i>The State Historical Society of Iowa in War Times.</i>	December, 1918.
19	<i>The History of Iowa's Part in the World War.</i>	January, 1919.
20	<i>A Tentative Outline for a County War History.</i>	February, 1919.
21	<i>A Tentative Outline for a State War History.</i>	March, 1919.
23	<i>The Writing of War History in Iowa.</i>	May, 1919.

On an even more impressive scale were the following beautifully bound books published by the Society in a series entitled — IOWA CHRONICLES OF THE WORLD WAR.

Fullbrook, Earl S., *The Red Cross in Iowa*. 2 vols. (1922)

Hansen, Marcus Lee, *Welfare Campaigns in Iowa*. (1920)

Hansen, Marcus Lee, *Welfare Work in Iowa*. (1921)

Pollock, Ivan L., *The Food Administration in Iowa*. 2 vols. (1923)

Whitney, Nathaniel R., *The Sale of War Bonds in Iowa*. (1923)

The seven volumes comprising this set were distributed to members of the Society and to over 100 Iowa college and tax-supported libraries. When World War II broke out this Series served as a valuable guide to those faced with similar responsibilities on the Home Front after Pearl Harbor. Indeed, the Whitney volume was virtually exhausted as copies were sent out to directors of fund raising campaigns during World War II.

The Society took another step toward recording the history of World War I when it published a volume by Jacob A. Swisher entitled *The American Legion in Iowa*. Issued in 1929, a decade after the launching of the American Legion in St. Louis, the State Historical Society blazed a trail for similar Historical Societies to follow. Not only did Iowa win fame through the election of Hanford MacNider as National Commander of the American Legion, but those who have headed up the Iowa Legion itself — Mathew A. Tinley, Hanford MacNider, Daniel F.

Steck, C. B. Robbins, and Bert J. Halligan — to mention the first five State Commanders, have been outstanding citizens of the Hawkeye State. Over six hundred Legion Posts were established in Iowa following World War I and while some communities proved too small to maintain a Legion Post, there are still some 600 posts in Iowa with a membership of 90,454 on March 15, 1967.

Without doubt the most impressive publication issued by the Society on World War I was John H. Taber's 2-volume work — *The Story of the 168th Infantry*. These two volumes, which were based on the immediate records and experiences of the Iowa members of the Rainbow Division, were issued by the Society in 1925 and won widespread acclaim. Since the edition was relatively small, it has long been out of print but frequently in demand. To meet this demand in part it has been determined to reprint portions of the book in a special issue of *The Palimpsest* to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the entry of the United States into World War I.

The experiences of the 168th Infantry serve as a mirror of the deeds and exploits of those equally heroic Iowans who achieved fame in World War II but who unfortunately were not as consecrated in their efforts to record history as were the officers and men of the 168th Infantry. It is only when pictures, letters, diaries, and reminiscences are preserved and made available to the State Historical Society that an accurate history of men in war can be recorded.

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