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7 speakers (Theo Mayer, Mike Shuster, Allan Axelrod, Dr. Lengel, Jon Tester, Josh Villanueva, Speaker 7)

[0:00:07]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode 118. It's about then, what was happening 100 years ago in the aftermath of World War I, and it's about now, how World War I is being remembered and commemorated, written about and discussed, learned and taught. But most importantly, it's about why and how we'll never let those events fall back into the mists of obscurity. So join us, as we explore the many facets of World War I, both then and now. This week on the show we're going to explore the headlines and the news 100 years ago in mid April. We'll hear from Mike Shuster on the Peace Treaty as it goes to print. We have part two of George Creel, Selling the War, with Allan Axelrod. Dr. Edward Lengel continues his countdown of favorite World War I memoirs. This week, Florence Farmborough, An Englishwoman's Epic Journey Through Russia. We're joined by Senator Jon Tester, who's co-sponsoring the Senate's bipartisan bill called the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019. We're gonna introduce you to a new section on our website, American Music of World War I, with curator Joshua [Villanueva]. And the highlight stories from last week's dispatch newsletter, all this week on World War I Centennial News, which is brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, the Star Foundation, the General Motors Foundation, as well as the good people of Walmart. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the Commission and your host. Welcome to the show. 100 years ago this week, we're going to pick just a couple of simple threads to follow through the headlines of the New York Times. One story is the rival efforts to win the prize for that first Transatlantic flight, a story that we've introduced to you before. And this week, two teams are going at it full force. The second story is the interwoven issue of the big Red Scare and the Bolshevik Revolution as it roars out of Russia against Wilson's new recommendation and push to provide Russia with humanitarian famine relief. Another perfect Wilsonian conflict between doing the right thing and the political realities of the times. With that as a background, we're going to jump into our centennial time machine and go back to the second week of April 1919. Okay, we're back in 1919 and with a huge prize at stake, \$1,000,000 in 2019 terms. Two rival teams who want to be the first to achieve a nonstop Transatlantic flight struggle to compete against the challenge, the elements, and each other. The story starts right away on Saturday, April 12th. Headline: Trans sea flight may start today, Hawker plans to get away from St. John before 4:00 in afternoon. Another biplane arrives. Captain Morgan with [Martinside] from England working to get ahead of rivals. The next day, on Sunday April 13th, another front page article hits the headlines. Headline: Plans start today on win or die Atlantic flight. [inaudible] with team to drop entire undercarriage into sea when 100 miles from shore. Precautions cast aside, fear of rivalry leads, Hawker and Grieves to risk drowning or crashing to earth. Navigator's difficulty increased by sacrifices to speed. Two attempts at start yesterday. Fail. The next day, Monday April 14, frustration. Headline: Start of ocean flight delayed by rain and fog. Continued bad weather may mean race between Sopwith and Martinsyde teams, latter nearly ready. Hawker lost chance for first attempt through delay in final preparations. They visit their rivals' camps. Hawker and Grieves outline plans for piloting and navigating their craft. By Tuesday April 15th, the frustration continues. But by now the two rival teams have decided to make the best of it and they get together for dinner. Headline: [Chafe] at delay in ocean flight. Hawker and Grieves prevented by mud and wind from getting a start. Rivals meet at dinner, discuss Martinsyde venture aimed to show the commercial possibilities of aviation. And that's it for our fly boys this week. There was a note about them in the Saturday April 19 issue that mainly confirmed that both teams were still grounded due to bad weather. For our second thread, we go back to the top of the week and explore Wilson's latest initiative. Now, when I saw this, for me, I could hear the allied foreheads being slapped and feel the heads shaking with incredulity from a century ago with [foreign language] there he goes again. On Saturday April 12th, one of the main headlines reads headline: President offers plan to feed Soviet Russia. Relief opposed by French, say Wilson's plan would be recognition of Bolshevik government and anti-Reds may object. Neutral Nations Commission favors aid to famine region, where 200,000 people die monthly. Over the next few days, communists take over stories abound as Wilson and Hoover try to connect food aid, not as a support to the communists and the Bolsheviks, but as a way to bring them into the allied camp. Headline: Communists seize power in new Munich revolt. Bavarian Soviet is ousted. Council of 10 takes control in behalf of communists. Heavy fighting in Munich. Police stations are stormed and officials arrested as hostages. And another headline: Bolsheviks offer terms to allies for goods and recognition, will suspend Red Terror, and restrict propaganda. Hoover says hunger may wipe our bourgeoisie. Headline: Ukrainian Bolsheviks capture Crimean capital. On Tuesday April 15th, headline: Sharp fighting in German cities. Battle with Munich Reds. Troops defeat Dusseldorf [spartisides] preparing for battle in Dresden. However, by Thursday April 17th, it looks like the initiative is getting support via the neutral nations. Headline: Allies to feed Russia if Reds end hostilities. Neutrals to help Russia. [Nansen] named as head of revictualing commission. Revictualing? Now, there's a word we don't use much anymore. Pro ally Russians object, say new policy means recognition of Lenin. But humane considerations prevail. And wrapping up the story for this week, on Friday April 18, headline: Allies will feed Russia, but require peace. Allies refuse to adopt Nansen's plan unless hostilities entirely cease. Food must reach hungry. Lenin willing to stop fighting if food is sent. And those are some of the stories in the headlines 100 years ago

this week. We purposely didn't focus on the Versailles Peace Conference machinations, as it rattles forward towards a conclusion and towards what many, even at the time, recognize as the foundation for an inevitable future war. For that overview, we're going to Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for the Great War Project blog. Now Mike, your post this week takes us through the first printing of the Peace Treaty. So, what was once envisioned to be a reflection of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, a vision of a new world order based on the foundations of democracy, self determination with a representative league of nations meant to prevent another global disaster in the future. A vision we need to point out, which was a key factor in why the Germans agreed to an armistice. But that's not really what's happening, is it?

[0:09:41]

Mike Shuster: No, not at all. And so, the headline reads: The shock of the treaty. Wilson's relations with the Germans draft treaty and abomination, disappointment, and depression. The seeds of another war. This is special to the Great War Project. The Germans, in the midst of fighting Bolsheviks and imminent starvation, managed to stay in close touch with the peace process in Paris, so reports historian Thomas Fleming. They'd even set up a bureau for peace negotiations. The bureau's existence testified to the widespread German conviction that Germany had signed a contract with Woodrow Wilson to negotiate peace on the basis of Wilson's 14 Points. The country put 40 bureaucrats to work, Fleming reports, on Wilson's various statements on peace, backed up by more than 100 experts on agriculture, industry, education, and almost every other conceivable topic that might come up when negotiations with the allies began. When the allied note asked Berlin to send representatives to hear the preliminary terms arrived in Berlin, the German Foreign Minister assumed that the document could be picked up by a messenger. He would dispatch an Ambassador, an aid, and four clerks to do the job. Back came a stiff reply from the allies. They wanted top individuals, individuals capable of carrying out decisions, plenipotentiaries in the parlance of diplomacy ready to discuss all aspects of the proposed peace. The Foreign Minister, a veteran diplomat, was not in the least [inaudible]. He quickly assembled politicians, soldiers, and top level diplomats, and soon 180 Germans were on their way to Versailles. They arrived on April 29th a century ago. Around their hotel was a barbed wire fence patrolled by French centuries. For the next week reports historian Fleming, the Germans waited and waited and waited. In Paris, the drafting committee was still writing the treaty. Meanwhile, groups of French patriots showed up at the hotel's barbed wire fence to scream insults at the Germans. On May 5th a century ago, the draft of the Treaty went to the printer, more than 200 pages, 440 articles, 75,000 words. Before dawn on May 7th, messengers rushed copies to allied delegations, including to collaborating officials such as Herbert Hoover, in charge of getting food to the starving people of Germany. Hoover concluded that Wilson could not make peace on the basis of the 14 Points and he didn't hold back telling Wilson as much. Hoover finished reading the draft treaty at dawn. He could not believe his own disappointment. The thing was an abomination, a parody of the 14 Points. The economic clauses aimed at crippling Germany would pull down the whole continent. Unquestionably, the terms contained the seeds of another war was Hoover's view. And in the words of US Secretary of State Robert Lansing, "The terms were immeasurably harsh and humiliating, and they made a mockery of the League of Nations. What did it all add up to," Lansing asked. "Disappointment, regret, depression." And that's the news these days from the Great War Project a century ago.

[0:12:52]

Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster is the curator for the Great War Project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. Just days after Congress votes to enter World War I, President Wilson appoints a chairman of what was to be called the Committee on Public Information, the CPI. The man was George Edward Creel, one of the most interesting, obscure, and I think influential characters of this era. So, with us to explore this character is Allen Axelrod, the author of *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda*. It's the bio of George Creel, and this is part two of our conversation. You'll find part one in episode 117. Allan, to kick off part two let's talk about post armistice. You know, we've republished every issue of the official bulletin on the website at the Commission. And one day, at the end of May, it just stops. So, on April 1st, suddenly there's nothing in the last issue that says we're stopping. It's just all of a sudden it goes away. Did the whole committee just evaporate all of a sudden?

[0:14:05]

Allan Axelrod: It evaporated all of a sudden. Congress cut it off and Congress went after it with almost literally a hatchet. They threw everything away that they could get their hands on, they destroyed all the records they could get their hands on. The only things that were saved was what Creel himself managed to salvage. He rented trucks and men to load them, and took stuff away and stored it at his own expense. And any of this vast amount of material that he didn't save was destroyed. There was a real revulsion in Congress against everything he had done. It was very strange.

[0:14:46]

Theo Mayer: Well, revulsion of just him, or him and Wilson both?

[0:14:49]

Allan Axelrod: After the armistice and ultimately after the defeat of the League of Nations in the US and the Treaty of Versailles, there was a real collective political effort at group national amnesia. There was almost an effort to erase most of what the war had been about, and Creel's effort was part of it. I actually think that part of the animus against Creel was that he had done his job too well, that the propaganda and the mindset it created were considered dangerous, and that the incoming republican wave that swept in after Wilson, first with the mid term elections that transformed the balance of Congress, wanted to disengage the nation from the global orientation that it was getting under Wilson. It was the closest thing we ever had to a book burning.

[0:15:50]

Theo Mayer: So, we get to the end of the war and suddenly all of this just sort of disappears, evaporates, goes away. And over the next number of years, this stuff starts to reemerge as Germany reemerges in power. We've talked about that in the past. Why don't you talk about that a little bit.

[0:16:09]

Allan Axelrod: Creel himself preserved much of this and later told the story, but between the wars with the rise of the Nazi party and the rise of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels discovered not Creel first, but actually the writings of the nephew of Sigmund Freud, this Jew named Edward Bernays, and his book Propaganda, which came out in the 1920s, and then there was another book after that. Goebbels was very excited about this, and through it he discovered the work of the Committee on Public Information. He put all of this together and saw this as the template for what the Nazis needed to do to not just help further the demonization of the Jews, but for creating an orientation to war. The Germans had lost World War I, but they came out of World War I in tact. Their cities weren't destroyed, their farms weren't destroyed, they weren't pocked with shell holes, they weren't crisscrossed with trenches, but they had lost. That became a narrative of betrayal, betrayal by democracy, and betrayal by the Jews. That became the central message of Nazi propaganda. And the answer to that was to fight to re-litigate that war with a new war. And the basis for doing that had all been laid out by the methods of Creel and Bernays and others who worked for the CPI. It had to do not with withholding information, but by controlling information and putting it out there in profusion and with apparent full transparency. And Bernays, when he learned of this, was appalled that Goebbels had his books in his library and was a big fan.

[0:18:12]

Theo Mayer: Well, it is incredibly ironic. Allan, let's wrap this up with what happened to Creel after World War I as a person.

[0:18:22]

Allan Axelrod: Creel became a writer. I mean, he went on writing. He became a journalist. He made a very good living as a feature writer for popular magazines, such as Colliers and so forth. And then he became a labor activist during the Depression, and once again found somebody to champion and to support in Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. And he tried to enter politics. He ran for Governor of California in 1934 in the democratic primary, and his leading opponent was Upton Sinclair. Neither of them prevailed, of course. But he didn't disappear, he just never became particularly influential.

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Theo Mayer: Obviously he was incredibly influential in this period from turn of the century, 1915 on through 1920 something. Why don't we know his name?

[0:19:23]

Allan Axelrod: Well, I would say first of all the major reason is that there was an active movement at the end of the war to bury him. He was excluded from history that essentially he himself wrote, and he never again attained prominence in politics. Until the emergence of FDR, the White House was dominated by republicans, politics was dominated by republicans. He was an [inaudible] republican, so he wasn't going to get any love there. And he turned to writing a series of popular, but quite undistinguished books. I mean, if you read his writing it's fascinating historically, but he wasn't a very good writer. He's rather dull, he is burdened by cliches. He's the kind of labor oriented popular writers of the 30s, but without any real voice. So, he never really got a foothold in the popular mind. He became a kind of shadowy figure. He was discredited. He was the victim of very deliberate campaigns to discredit him, and they stuck. He wasn't ruined as a human being. He made money, he lived. He certainly wasn't in despair. He wrote toward the very end of his life an autobiography that is at least readable, called Rebel at Large, but nobody much cared.

[0:20:53]

Theo Mayer: Well Allan, I think that that's a great wrap of the interview. You're one of the very few people who's actually written a book about him, and we've got the link in the podcast notes. It's called Selling the Great War. What got you to write the book?

[0:21:07]

Allan Axelrod: I became interested in Creel at the time that President George W. Bush was leading us into a war against the one country that had nothing to do with 9/11. And it was done in a way that was a massive propaganda campaign, the like of which I had never seen as an American. I mean, I lived through Vietnam. Even then it wasn't that kind of approach. So, I had heard about Creel. I have a friend who is a collector of World War I posters, magnificent collection. And it was through the posters that I came to know about the Committee on Public Information. In fact, I edited a book that he wrote. And it was through all that that I found the name of Creel and I discovered how he advertised America, and I discovered Rebel at Large. I read these and I thought well, this man should be written about.

[0:22:05]

Theo Mayer: Well Allan, you and I had a conversation one day. We picked two people that without whom World War I would not have looked at all like it looked, and one of them was not Wilson.

[0:22:15]

Allan Axelrod: I think we decided finally that it was Pershing and Creel.

[0:22:19]

Theo Mayer: Yes, we did.

[0:22:22]

Allan Axelrod: And it's quite true. In fact, I think had a republican won in 1912, actually who would've won in 1912 would've been Teddy Roosevelt running as the bull moose. He came in second to Wilson in 1912. And had Teddy Roosevelt been in the White House, we would have been in World War I probably in 1914 or 1915, but there would not have been this transformation of the American public into an almost monolithic commitment to the war. It was very frightening. As you know, there were terrible consequences that Creel did his best to avoid, which was retribution against immigrants of all kinds, but especially Germans of course, laws against not only speaking German in public, but speaking any foreign language in public, things like that. But without Creel, there would not have been what Creel called this kind of Nietzsche like phrase. There would not have been a war wheel in America. There would not have been this total support that enabled a nation that had about the 17th largest army. And it was able to create a will to turn that into 4,000,000 very, very rapidly. The war was declared on the 6th of April, the Committee on Public Information was in business on the 13th, and almost instantly was controlling every piece of war related news that reached the American public and much of the international public too.

[0:24:02]

Theo Mayer: And that concludes our two part exploration of George Creel, the man who sold America on World War I, with Allan Axelrod, a prolific author and publisher who's also, by the way, writing a book about the history of the World War I Centennial Commission. We have links for you in the podcast notes. This week, regular contributor, historian, Dr. Edward Lengel continues his new series of stories profiling his top 10 selections of the many, many hundreds of published personal accounts from the war. This week, Florence Farmborough, an Englishwoman's Epic Journey to Russia. Ed's pick for best war memoir number nine.

[0:24:45]

Dr. Lengel: The word epic only begins to describe the experiences of Englishwoman Florence Farmborough during the first World War. 21 years old, she journeyed to Russia in 1908 to work as a governess with families in Kiev and Moscow. That in of itself seemed like an adventure. It paled though in comparison to what would follow as war broke out in 1914, and Farmborough, volunteering for service with the Red Cross, experienced all the drama, adventure, and suffering that war on the Eastern front had to offer, culminating in a desperate journey across Siberia to escape the Russian Civil War in 1918. Her diary memoir with the Armies of the Tsar and nurse at the Russian front in 1914 to 18 ranks number 9 on my list of the top 10 personal accounts of the first World War. Farmborough's massive diary, originally 400,000 words before being culled down for publication, begins with a scene redolent of Russia's plight at a procession attended by Tsar Nicholas II and his family at the Kremlin in August 1914. As Farmborough watched, the imperial family advanced in August splendor toward the Cathedral of the Assumption. On their way an old peasant man somehow managed to slip through the security cordon and attempt to present a petition for redress of grievances. While the Tsar studiously ignored the old man, the security detail descended upon the peasant and quickly blotted him from view. Everyone in the crowd knew he was doomed. Joining the Red Cross, Farmborough was sent to the front in time for the campaign of 1915. She served alongside the Russian army in Poland. She witnessed its hopeful advance against German forces, and it's crushing defeat. "Is there anything so hopeless, so dreadful as a retreated knight," she wrote in her diary in May 1915. "The earth lies cold and forgotten. Multitudinous human beings struggle onwards towards an unknown destination. How and when will it all end? All this I felt and more when I could think and analyze my feelings, but ever again that strange, unaccountable wave of exultation

would sweep over me. It was difficult to define, yet I well knew that had I been offered an alternative, I would've cried without a moment's hesitation. Hardships, a legion of them, and all else besides, but only to remain on active service." Those hardships came as Farmborough followed campaign after campaign in Poland, Russia, and Romania over the years to come, all described lyrically and with an attention for detail in her incredible diary. She accompanied the heady advances of the 1916 Brusilov Offensive, and then the decay and eventual collapse of the Tsarists and then the liberal Kerensky regimes in 1917. November 1917 found her in Moscow witnessing the onset of the Bolshevik revolution. Only Farmborough's attachment to her adopted Russian family in Moscow kept her on in Russia, [braming] the dangers of a country collapsing into a long, brutal civil war. With allied intervention against the Bolsheviks at several spots, her position as a British citizen had by the beginning of 1918 become particularly dangerous. In March 1918 then, Farmborough and a few dozen other westerners managed to secure passage on a rickety filthy goods train traveling from Vladivostok via the Trans Siberian Railway. Their icy, fearful journey was for Farmborough a fitting culmination to an epic personal journey over the past decade that brought a personal transformation. As her adventures ended and she finally departed Vladivostok for America, Farmborough concluded her diary with these words. "I stood on deck and watched Russia slowly recede. Soon, all that was visible was a range of pale gray mountains on the horizon. Then a thick blue curtain of mist fell and hid from my sight the land which I had loved to truly and which I had served so gladly. As I pondered on all that had happened in that great suffering Russia, my heart contracted with pain and I felt that I could weep and weep. I prayed that those bittersweet wartime experiences of mine had not been in vain. And because sorrow and suffering teach great truths, I prayed too that I had learned from them never to grumble, to be compassionate and merciful, and to recognize always and try to alleviate the sorrow in another human heart."

[0:29:08]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Edward Lengel's blog is called A Storyteller Hiking Through History, and it's filled with first person perspectives and accounts that provide a nuanced insight into the era. We have links to Ed's posts and his author's website in the podcast notes. Okay, it's time to fast forward into the present with World War I Centennial News Now. During this part of the podcast, we explore how World War I is being remembered and commemorated, written about and discussed, taught and learned today. Here's where we spotlight the surprisingly numerous and significant remembrances, honorings, commemoration activity surrounding World War I and World War I themes. For remembering veterans, there are bills moving through both houses of the legislature to honor the Hello Girls. In the Senate, Senator Jon Tester, democrat from Montana, and Senator Marsha Blackburn, republican from Tennessee, are cosponsoring a bipartisan bill called the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019. We're very honored to have Senator Tester with us today to talk about the bill, what it is, and explore how you, our listeners, can help get this properly deserved honor bestowed on these pioneering women who served so successfully and then struggled to be recognized and to receive the veteran's benefits. Senator, welcome to the podcast.

[0:30:48]

Jon Tester: It is great to be here. Thanks for having me Theo.

[0:30:51]

Theo Mayer: So Senator, you're a ranking member of the US Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee. How did this story come to you and how did it come to light for you?

[0:30:59]

Jon Tester: Well look, as with most the good ideas I get, I usually get them from Montanans, and this is no exception. A fellow who served this country in the military by the name of Ed [Saunders] who's a bit of a history buff did some research, and there's been a number of documentaries written about the Hello Girls. He approached me and asked if we could do something to recognize these women who performed incredible services during World War I, and as you said really were able to connect the American troops with the French troops and made a difference in that battle. And so, we came up with the idea of getting in a Congressional Gold Medal to the folks who were Hello Girls. There's not many of them left quite frankly now. This should've been done 50, 60 years ago. But the fact of the matter is we are where we are, and I thought it was the right thing to do to give recognition, one of the highest civilian medals in fact, to women who served in our military during World War I and who did an incredible job connecting every outpost between the Americans and the French. It's one of those things that's better late than never, and get these folks the honors that they deserve so that we can remember our history and learn from our history as we move forward.

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Theo Mayer: Senator, I read the legislation and it's a good read. For legislation that's rare. You really told the story of the Hello Girls in it. Giving out listeners a quick overview, exactly what does the legislation provide for?

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Jon Tester: There were thousands of applicants that applied to be in the US Army Signal Corps. 450 of those Hello Girl applicants were accepted. They served right alongside their male counterparts, but they were denied veteran status and all the benefits that come with veteran status. They petitioned Congress for six decades before they received veteran status and got recognition for their service. By that time, the majority of the Hello Girls had passed away. And some of these folks were from Montana, and a [inaudible] name of Merle Egan Anderson led the fight of recognition before Congress. So, Montana's played an important role in this. So, what this bill would do Theo, is it would honor the service and sacrifice of the Hello Girls by issuing a Congressional Gold Medal, which is one of the highest civilian medals and honors that are awarded by the United States of America. It just really does give recognition to a group of women who had a hard time getting recognition throughout this country's history. They played an incredible role in our success in World War I, and I think it's long past time that we do issue and give recognition to the Hello Girls with the Congressional Gold Medal.

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Theo Mayer: Now, this is a bipartisan effort to recognize these women. How did Senator Blackburn get involved?

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Jon Tester: It is a bipartisan effort, and we visited and my staff more importantly visited with some of the staff members. We started with the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Marsha Blackburn is a new senator from Tennessee, replacing Bob Corker. She is new to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, and she had a personal interest in this and decided to help cosponsor this bill and make it bipartisan. So, now the work really begins because we've got to try to get as many people as possible with a minimum of 67 Senators on this bill to be able to move it forward. I think if we're able to do that, if we're able to actually get 67 or more, hopefully there'll be more, I can't imagine ... Should get everybody quite frankly because it's something that needs to happen. But if we're able to get 67 or more, then it puts real pressure once we get it to the Committee to take it up on the floor and get it passed.

[0:34:21]

Theo Mayer: Now, as you might guess our audience is very, very World War I interested and very much interested in this story. We've been talking about it for a couple years with them. What can they do to help?

[0:34:32]

Jon Tester: Well, it's pretty simple. Your listeners are from all over the country, and what I would say is if you don't know who your representative or your Senator is, get on the line or go down to the library and find out who it is and then contact them. Give them a call or send them an email. Those are the two best ways of getting in contact with them. And advocate for giving the Hello Girls a Congressional Gold Medal. The number of the Act, if you've got a pen and paper you can write this down, is S206. If you're able to call your Senator, refer to S206, which is the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act. And if you're on the House version, and the House version's introduced by a fellow out of Missouri by the name of Emanuel Cleaver who everybody knows in Missouri and is fairly well known around the country, the number of that bill is HR1953. What'll happen is if you contact enough folks and it's 67 in the Senate that we need to have, 145 in the House, then we'll get it passed in the House, get it passed in the Senate, combine the two bills because they're identical, and then it'll go to the President's desk for his signature.

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Theo Mayer: Well Senator, I wanted to thank both you and Senator Blackburn for taking your precious time and effort to help the Hello Girls get the deserved recognition. Thank you sir.

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Jon Tester: Thank you Theo. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the issue.

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Theo Mayer: Senator Jon Tester is a ranking member of the US Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and the cosponsor of Senate bill number 206, the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019. We have links for you in the podcast notes to the legislation, and as a courtesy to a website where you can look up the names of your legislators from both the House and the Senate. In Commission News, you may not have spent much time on the World War I Centennial Commissions website, but if you Google World War I Centennial you'll get there. The site is well over 10,000 pages and articles about World War I, every aspect of it. We didn't just build the site. You know, we're a really small a group. But what we did was we created a sort of digital community garden of information about World War I, and then we invited state commissions and subject matter experts to join us. We call them publishing partners. Conceptually, we've given them a little digital plot of land and a lot of wonderful people have created World War I information gardens. The results are really outstanding. You can pretty much put any World War I related subject into the search bar and get an amazing amount of information. Interestingly, one of the most popular sections happens to be about World War I and medicine. We didn't expect that. This week we have a great new section of the site that we'd like to profile, American music in World War I. Joining us is former World War I Centennial Commission

intern Joshua Villanueva. An undergraduate student at McGill University, Josh is pursuing a double major in piano performance, ancient classics, and a minor in early music. So, he's not only an active performer, but he's also into researching early 20th Century American music. Put that together with 100 pounds of effort and dedication and voila, an amazing website about American music in World War I. Josh, welcome to the show.

[0:37:49]

Josh Villanueva: Thank you.

[0:37:50]

Theo Mayer: Okay Josh, before we get into the site itself, let's talk about you for a moment. How did you get into both a performance and an academic interest in music?

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Josh Villanueva: I started playing the piano at age three and violin at age seven. Since then, I have been actively performing on both international and domestic stages. I first got interested in research when I started studying at McGill. I worked on several projects beforehand as an assistant researcher, so I am familiar with how research projects go. Working on these research projects prompted me to get a head start on musicology, and my research on American music in World War I happens to be my first research that I lead.

[0:38:30]

Theo Mayer: When were you an intern at the Commission? How was that?

[0:38:33]

Josh Villanueva: I started interning at the Commission on June of 2018, where I worked directly with the Commission's publisher, Chris Christopher. My projects included working on the 100 [cities] memorial database, which was exciting because I had the opportunity to discover memorials that had been largely forgotten and publish them on the database.

[0:38:52]

Theo Mayer: Josh, as a passionate music lover myself, I have to say you created a really wonderful and amazing site. You worked on this for a long time. When you took on the project did you have any idea of how big an undertaking it was going to be?

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Josh Villanueva: Yes, I had a vague idea. I knew that working on a comprehensive site on American music in World War I would be challenging work, and in fact, I didn't know where to start at first. I approached this project not as a regular research project, but as a combination of collecting raw information from the National Archives and the Library of Congress, and presenting them to the public with some of my annotations. Currently, there is no resource, both online or in book form, that comprehends simply covers American music in World War I.

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Theo Mayer: Music played such an important role, both in the war effort and the psychology of the nation. What did you find in all that?

[0:39:42]

Josh Villanueva: Before America entered the war in 1917, and during the time when pacifism and neutrality was the tune of the day, we find sheet music entitled like I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier, which clearly reflects the pacifist movement before the war. But as soon as America entered into the war in 1917, we find sheet music published over there, which was published only a couple of days after America declared war on Germany. Therefore, there's this shift from pacifism to national consciousness or to recruitment, and really garnering support both on the home front and eventually in the trenches.

[0:40:20]

Theo Mayer: How did you approach it? How is the site organized? In other words, when I go there what am I gonna find? What's the experience you're trying to provide?

[0:40:28]

Josh Villanueva: Well, I think it's important to note that the site is not yet fully published. But to give you a preview, I think it will be great to give you an outline of how the site is organized in several sections. The first section is focused on where popular songs were published, in Tin Pan Alley, in New York City, and how the different genres of pop songs functioned as a social commentary to the nation's ideals. They became really essential in garnering support once America entered the war in 1917. The second section focuses on songs produced in Tin Pan Alley from 1914 to

1918, which show a thematic link with the progress of the war that sympathized with the allied cause despite American neutrality. Propaganda took the form of encouragement. Songs helped recruit new soldiers and helped sustain their morale while they served. Songs also promoted general patriotism and support for the war. Some even masked advertising ploys. Tin Pan Alley responded congruently with rising public opinion to join the war. The themes of Tin Pan Alley songs run parallel to the notion of a crusade for democracy that played a crucial role in shaping American national identity. The next section is about songs that were published by the Vanity Press. What is interesting about these songs is that they were not under the pressure of mainstream ideals, so we can find songs that were not really consistent with what was going on at the time and offers as a different perspective of the war effort. These composers who published through the Vanity Press did not conform strictly to the norm applied by Woodrow Wilson's CPI, and gives us an insight into examining these less popular songs that may help us in forming a better understanding American society at the time.

[0:42:11]

Theo Mayer: Josh, in your research did you find that George Creel and the CPI, the Committee on Public Information, did they get deeply involved in controlling the music industry, and how did they choose to do that?

[0:42:22]

Josh Villanueva: Yes, in one way. The CPI had organized what we call now the [four minute man], and besides giving out four minute speeches about recruiting people to help the war effort, they also had something called the four minute singing. They would usually do that inside movie theaters, where they would have this collection of patriotic songs that were popular at the time. So, they had a hold on how to raise morale.

[0:42:49]

Theo Mayer: Well Josh, everybody who digs into World War I as a subject finds new and unexpected treasures, new realizations, new perceptions, new information. What would you say are a couple of more interesting nuggets of gold you came out with?

[0:43:04]

Josh Villanueva: Well, in the section training of soldiers you can find the complete collection of music in the camps that is an official newsletter of the song leaders from November 1917 to May 1919. That was published weekly and served as a way for song leaders to exchange ideas on training methods, on really how to train soldiers through singing. These documents are from the National Archives, and for the first time the scanned copies of music in the camps are now made available online and can be downloaded.

[0:43:32]

Theo Mayer: Okay. What do you think are some of the most important things that everybody should remember about American music in World War I?

[0:43:38]

Josh Villanueva: Well, I think we find that the government was trying to paint a picture of an exciting crusade. There were some people who criticized on the war effort and didn't see the reason on why America should and involved in a war that is basically foreign. The thing that we can get out from this is that music was used as both propaganda and entertainment.

[0:44:01]

Theo Mayer: Thank you Josh for this wonderful gift you've put together for all the music lovers of the world. What's your suggestion for a piece of music we should play to wrap up this segment?

[0:44:10]

Josh Villanueva: Over There by George Cohan.

[0:44:13]

Speaker 7: Over there, over there. Send the word, send the word over there, that the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming, the drums rum-tumming everywhere, over there-

[0:44:30]

Theo Mayer: Joshua Villanueva, an undergraduate student at McGill university and the curator for the American music of World War I section of our website at ww1cc.org/music, all lower case. Joshua's great work and the entire website is going to be archived in perpetuity by the Government Publishing Office as a document of interest to the American people. And of course, we have links for you in the podcast notes. That brings us to articles and posts. We're going to highlight some select stories you're going to find in our weekly newsletter, the Dispatch. For our first headline selection: Wrath ceremony at Cypress Hills National Cemetery for New York World War I Heroes. Kicking off

our participation in the 2019 World War I theme for New York's Fleet Week, on Thursday May 2nd, the US World War I Centennial Commission is going to host a commemorative event at Cypress Hills National Cemetery. There we're gonna take some moments to remember some World War I veterans resting at Cypress Hills. Those heroes specifically include legendary Marine sergeant Major Dan Daley, World War I hero and double recipient of the Medal of Honor, Navy Coxswain John Cooper, also a double recipient of the Medal of Honor. We're also gonna honor some international colleagues, specifically 21 World War I era sailors from the French navy and 3 sailors of the Royal British Navy, all of whom passed away in New York during the World War I influenza pandemic, the so called Spanish Flu. The event is open to the public and you can follow the link in the weekly dispatch to get details. Our second story is headlined: A historic national war pledge card is found inside the walls of a house in Pelham, New York. World War I wasn't just the military's war. It was the nation's war. And an important part of the war effort was to provide monetary support to national campaigns. For example, one to raise \$35,000,000 for the YMCA's National War Work Council to fund comfort and support to American troops, allied troops, and prisoners of war. Recently, a resident of Pelham discovered an unused pledge card hiding inside the walls of her home. For our third story: US Mint releases images of struck 2019 American Legion Centennial Coins. As the American Legion celebrates the centennial of its birth, the United States Mint has released the first images of the three 2019 American Legion 100th anniversary commemorative coins. The mint is offering proof and uncirculated versions of the program's gold \$5 half eagle, silver dollar, and copper nickel clad half dollar. Follow the links in the dispatch article to get the details, especially if you're interested in getting some of these great collectible US Mint commemorative coins. Next highlight: The Library of Congress' Veteran's history Project has updated collections policies and scopes to include gold star voices. This year the Library of Congress' Veteran's History Project has made a special effort to collect and preserve the stories of World War I, and they found remarkable success in the form of donated World War I diaries, journals, and letters home. The effort was so successful that they further expanded their materials acceptance policy in partnership with our friends, the gold star families. The Veteran's History Project will now also collect, preserve, and make available the important stories of America's gold star veteran family members. There are links in the dispatch newsletter to learn more. There are a lot more interesting highlights, but I'm going to wrap it up with my favorite story of this issue. The headline is: Winnie the Pooh was created by a vet trying to explain World War I to his boy. There's nothing more heart wrenching to veteran families than having to explain why daddy hasn't been the same since he returned from the war. A reasonable adult can grasp the idea that war is hell and that it can change a person forever, but an innocent kid, one that was sheltered by the very veteran, well it's hard to explain to him what's going on. AA Milne, an English author and veteran of both world wars was struggling to explain this harsh reality to his own child when he penned the 1926 classic, Winnie the Pooh. This is a story worth following with the links in the dispatch newsletter. And that's what the weekly dispatch newsletter is all about, a series of short paragraphs that act as an easy guide to great World War I news and information, like the podcast, from then and from now. You can subscribe to this wonderful free weekly guide at ww1cc.org/subscribe, all lower case, or follow our link in the podcast notes to the dispatch newsletter with its links. And that wraps up episode number 118 of the award winning World War I Centennial News podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests, crew, and supporters, including Mike Shuster, curator for the Great War Project blog, Allan Axelrod, author of *Selling the Great War* and 150 other books, Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian, author, and blogger, Jon Tester, Senator from Montana and cosponsor of the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019, Joshua Villanueva, student, performing musician, music researcher, and now website curator. Thanks to [Mack] Nelson and Tim [Crowe], our interview editing team, [Katz Laslow], the line producer for the show, Dave Kramer and [Dael Mishow] for research and script support. And I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. The World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate, and educate about World War I. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I, including with this podcast. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators, their classrooms, and the public. We're helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across the country. And of course, we're building America's National World War I Memorial in Washington DC. And next month, we're gonna take our World War I and memorial show on the road to New York's 2019 Navy Fleet Week. We want to thank the Commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as our other sponsors, the Star Foundation, the General Motors Foundation, as well as the good people of Walmart. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn. You'll find World War I centennial news in all the places you get your podcasts, and even including your smart speaker, or through Siri by saying "Play WWI Centennial News Podcast." The podcast Twitter handle is @theww1podcast. The Commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc, and we're on Facebook at WW1 Centennial. Thank you for joining us and don't forget, keep the story alive for America by helping us build the memorial. Just text the letters WWI or WW1 to the phone number 91999.

[0:52:35]

Speaker 7: Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun. Johnny show the hun your a son of a gun. Hoist the flag and let her fly, Yankee Doodle do or die. Pack your little kit, show your grit, do your bit. Yankee to the ranks from the towns and the tanks. Make your mother proud of you and the old red, white, and blue.

[0:53:06]

Theo Mayer: Thank you for listening. So long.
[0:53:09]