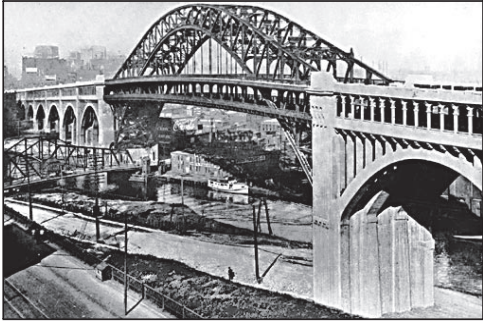


OUR CENTURY

1917

Geared up for war



PD FILE

The High-Level Bridge, or Veterans-Memorial Bridge.

AT A GLANCE

Women sought for jobs as war heats up

Cleveland factories were running all-out. But where were they to get workers? No longer were trains bringing immigrants daily to Union Station; now they were taking out new soldiers and sailors — 33,000 by the end of the year.

Suddenly, many more listings could be found under “Help Wanted — Female.”

The National Lamp Works advertised “Can use at once 25 girls between the ages of 16 and 18 years; bring school certificates and come prepared to work.”

On streetcars, fares were collected by “conductorettes”; the system even provided little swinging stools for them to sit on. School officials announced that they no longer would require teachers to resign if they married.

The other source of employees was the cotton fields of the South, now ravaged by the boll weevil. The number of blacks in Cleveland increased from 10,000 at the beginning of the war to 34,451 in 1920. They quickly settled along Central Ave. toward E. 55th St. A ghetto was taking shape.

Finally, east met west without waiting for the swing bridge to close.

After five years of construction, the 49-year-old Superior Viaduct was replaced by the Detroit-Superior Bridge — officially the Veterans Memorial Bridge since 1989, but in 1917, as today, best known as “the High-Level Bridge.”

The \$5.3 million, 5,360-foot-long structure featured a lower deck for streetcars, and in the middle section, passengers got a scare when they looked down through the tracks into the river 96 feet below. The cars returned to the surface on Superior Ave. at W. 6th St. and Detroit Ave. at W. 29th St. or W. 25th St. at Franklin Blvd.

Farther south, the \$1.4 million, 6,687-foot Clark Viaduct opened, connecting Clark Ave. with Pershing Ave. on the East Side.

Development spurted on the West and East sides.

A record crowd of 21,000 turned out for the Indians’ home opener at League Park. With Jim Bagby winning 21 games and Stan Coveleski 19, the Tribe finished third despite losing nine players to the wartime draft during the season.

At the suggestion of the two major leagues, the Army assigned drill instructors to each team. With bats serving as rifles, players went through formations each day, and at the end of the season, a contest determined the best drill team. The Indians finished third in that competition, too.

War gave a boost to the Prohibition movement. Women rebelled at skimping in their kitchens while brewers had grain for beer. The Northern Baptist Convention at the Hollenden Hotel in May called for Prohibition, condemned “vampires” hanging around Army camps and congratulated the Russian people who “under the leadership of God” had overthrown the czar. The Communists soon would overthrow the democratic Kerensky regime.

East Cleveland voters approved a charter that gave women the right to vote in city elections and set up a commission-manager form of government. In Cleveland, a group called the Committee of 15 studied submission of a city manager charter amendment to voters.

At the movies: Sarah Bernhardt in “Mothers of France” at the Stillman; Charlotte Walker in “Sloth” at the Miles; William S. Hart in “Truthful Tulliver” at the Madison; and for the kiddies, “Little Mary Sunshine” at the Alhambra.

At the Opera House, “Birth of a Nation” prompted one of Cleveland’s first civil-rights demonstrations: “Negroes Vent Ire at Race Picture,” said the headline. City officials tried to block its showing, but the Epoch Film Co. sued in federal court.



At left, men enlist for the Navy on Public Square in 1917. At right, Clevelanders wait to register for the draft at a station at E. 79th St. and Superior Ave., June 5, 1917.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Troops on parade; loyalties under scrutiny

By Fred McGunagle

War was in the air, and it was a heady feeling.

“Packed to the doors, the Grays Armory shook with the cheers of Cleveland people approving a message to President Woodrow Wilson of Cleveland’s loyalty,” the March 13 Plain Dealer said of the previous night’s mass meeting.

People had lined the streets waiting for the doors to open, with old-timers in Civil War uniforms among them. All stood and cheered when Troop A of the Ohio National Guard marched in to its reserved seats in the front while a band played “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Are Marching.” And the crowd roared its approval when James R. Garfield, son of the assassinated president, declared, “We must prepare for war!”

The Board of Education, meeting the same night, voted unanimously to hold meetings in every school to “solidify loyalty” and denounce “voices and influences making for cowardice and national immorality.” No debate on the subject was to be allowed.

The crowds got their wish on April 6 when, after more than a week of debate, Congress approved Wilson’s request for a declaration of war against the Central Powers. “Whistles Scream and Pedestrians Cheer as News Spreads,” said the headline.

Ten thousand Poles paraded to the Kosciuszko Monument in Wade Park; 1,000 Greeks marched in Youngstown to pledge their loyalty. Six thousand flag-waving Elyrians paraded through the streets. Oberlin College held a mass meeting to start a course in military training.

It had been 19 years since the quick, successful war against Spain and young men flocked to recruiting stations to win their share of glory. They marched off to Camp Sheridan in Montgomery, Ala., with the drums drum-drumming that the Yanks were coming “over there.”

A Clevelander, Robert Queissner, designed a flag for their families to place in a window: a blue star on a white field. A group calling itself the American Protective League embarrassed “slackers” who had not joined up.

As a side effect, the marriage license bureau of Cuyahoga County Probate Court was overwhelmed. Officials suggested to applicants that “clerks are rested during the earlier business hours, and they are in a much better condition to serve you then.”



PLAIN DEALER FILE

The Ohio National Guard’s 5th Regiment marches off to the station to be shipped to Europe, along E. 6th St. in 1917. This unit later became the 145th Infantry Regiment.

The Mayor’s Advisory War Committee urged citizens to conserve food because of the severe shortages facing the nation. The schools quickly planted war gardens, and owners of vacant lots made them available to neighbors. The city administration got a shock when the low bid for a coal purchase was \$7.25 a ton, more than triple the last contract.

The day war was declared, the German Waechter und Anzeiger newspaper carried a front-page editorial — in English — proclaiming the loyalty of Cleveland’s German-Americans, though it lamented: “It will be a war of brother and, in many cases, of son against father. Days of untold sorrows and bitterness are in store for us.” But the paper added: “If it shall break our hearts, American will not find us wanting.”

Nevertheless, 130,000 Clevelanders of German descent found themselves under suspicion as saboteurs. “Teuton spies” were reported urging blacks in the South to rebel. All amateur wireless operators were shut down for the duration. German was dropped from school curricula. Weidenthal Ave. off W. 25th St. was translated into Willowdale Ave. German Hospital changed its name to Fairview Park Hospital after the park nearby on Franklin Blvd. Johannes Wagner, star shortstop of the Pitts-

burgh Pirates, suddenly became John P. Wagner in baseball records.

In May, the Lakeside Unit from Lakeside Hospital became the first unit of the American Expeditionary Force to leave for France, serving as Base Hospital No. 4 throughout the war. The efficiency of the unit gave Dr. George Crile, its medical director, and three colleagues an idea for setting up a group medical practice after the war. It would be called the Cleveland Clinic.

At an “Americanization” ceremony on July 4, Sen. Atlee Pomerene proclaimed, “This is the greatest Fourth of July the world has ever witnessed.” On July 22, the city marked its 121st anniversary with a military parade, but also with a tribute to Thomas Winch, a Clevelander who had become the first member of the American Aviation Corps to die in Europe. Four days later, a memorial honored the first American soldier to be killed.

As casualties mounted — and gold stars replaced blue ones in windows — ebullience subsided. But Clevelanders pitched in to oversubscribe their share of the first Liberty Bond drive by more than 50 percent and to raise \$5 million for the American Red Cross; national headquarters called that “the best showing in the nation.” Business people organized as “Un-

cle Sam’s Salesmen” to promote the sale of war saving stamps. “Four-minute men” — and women — volunteered to deliver speeches on Americanism at nickelodeons in the four minutes it took to change reels. Daykin Brothers, plumbers, advertised that 116 Daykins were fighting with the British and 74 with the Yanks: “Not One Drop of Anarchistic, Communist, Nihilistic, Trust-busting, Traitorous Blood in Our Breed.”

Homemakers observed meatless days and wheatless days, and for dessert served a concoction of unsweetened applesauce called “1917 pudding.” On Nov. 8, when the temperature dropped to 8 below, Clevelanders shivered; coal was scarce and gas pressure was low. Many schools and nonessential manufacturing plants closed. Lacking coal, the street railways cut service, forcing many to walk to work. Gov. James Cox seized all coal in Ohio and ordered it sent where it was most needed. Stores were ordered to observe heatless days.

It was a cold, dark winter. Messengers arrived with telegrams from the War Department. The cheers for war had died out.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

March 16: With Russian casualties surpassing 2 million, Russian Czar Nicholas II abdicates, throwing the nation’s government into turmoil.

April 6: The United States declares war on Germany.

April 10: Vladimir Lenin returns to Russia, ending an 11-year exile in

Switzerland.

June 27: U.S. troops, led by Gen. John J. Pershing, land in France.

May 18: President Woodrow Wilson signs the Selective Service Act, requiring young men to register for a possible draft.

Nov. 7: Bolsheviks, headed by Le-

on and Leon Trotsky, seize power in Russia.

Nov. 21: In a daring offensive, British troops break through the Hindenburg Line near Cambrai, France.

Born: John F. Kennedy, Indira Gandhi, Dizzy Gillespie, Lena Horne, Robert Mitchum, Nat “King” Cole,

Ferdinand Marcos, John Connally.

Died: Francesca Cabrini (Mother Carbrini), the first American saint; frontiersman William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody; Belya Bennett Lockwood, suffragist and the first woman admitted to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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