

“In Honor of Those Who Served”

INTRODUCTION

By R. Eli Paul

Three years after the 1918 Armistice that ended the fighting of World War I, Ferdinand Foch made a triumphant tour of the United States. Docking in New York City on October 28, 1921, after an Atlantic voyage and greeted by throngs of adoring Americans, the French commander soon departed by train to fulfill the main purpose of his visit—to attend in Kansas City, Missouri, the annual convention of the American Legion. He arrived with American general John J. Pershing at Kansas City’s Union Station on Sunday, October 31, the day before the centerpiece event, the site dedication of the Liberty Memorial. The pair joined three other Allied military leaders, David Beatty of Great Britain, Armando Diaz of Italy, and Alfonse Jacques of Belgium, an unprecedented meeting of the five former commanders.¹

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1. The author drew upon the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* for details of Foch’s American visit as well *American Legion Weekly* 3 (October 21, 1921): 1; *ibid.* 3 (December 2, 1921): 8, 17; *ibid.* 3 (December 16, 1921): 6–5, 20; Remington Schuyler, “Wakia-Wa-Takape—Marshal Foch,” *Boys’ Life* (January 1922): 5, 32; Alton T. Roberts, “When Foch Came to America,” *American Legion Monthly* (August 1929): 20–23, 67–69; and

On November 1, the five, along with U.S. Vice President Calvin Coolidge, discharged their duties, dedicating the hill south of the railroad station, the future site of a \$2.5 million monument “in honor of those who served in the World War in the defense of liberty.” One hundred thousand spectators, half of them estimated to be veterans, joined in the proceedings. For a few days the young, boisterous metropolis of Kansas City, divided by a state line between Kansas and Missouri, had the undivided attention of the nation and its remembrance of the recent war. But just as quickly, the attention turned elsewhere. Foch continued his railroad trek and backtracked to the East.²

On November 11, Armistice Day, Foch found himself at Arlington Cemetery for another ceremony, the entombment of an unknown American soldier. As with the Kansas City gathering, a variety of dignitaries paid their respects, ranging from President Warren G. Harding, who officiated,

Remington Schuyler, “Chief Charging Thunder,” *ibid.* (August 1930): 16–17, 44. See clippings collection, National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Mo.

2. Derek Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget: Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial* (Kansas Cit.: Kansas City Star Books, 2001), 50–65, provides an account of the site dedication. *Tour of Marshal Foch in the United States as Guest of the American Legion, 1921*, autographed booklet, National World War I Museum. The booklet includes the portion of Foch’s travel itinerary arranged by the Pennsylvania Railroad, October 28 to November 11.



All of the most notable Allied commanders, with Vice President Calvin Coolidge, gathered on the reviewing stand during the 1921 Liberty Memorial site dedication. From left: Alfonse Jacques of Belgium, Armando Diaz of Italy, Coolidge, and Ferdinand Foch of France; on the far right is American general John J. Pershing and on his right is David Beatty of Great Britain.

to Foch again to Chief Plenty Coups of the Crow Indian tribe, who brought the program to a close when he laid his warbonnet on the grave site.³ Marshal Foch resumed his transcontinental tour of America. All told, he traveled an estimated fourteen thousand miles and stopped at more than sixty cities. He received at least thirty honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning and countless accolades from the throngs he met, all eager to see and hear the supreme commander of the victorious allied armies of the Great War. Before his December 15 departure from this country, observers had equated the import and impact of the Frenchman's visit to that of the beloved Marquis de Lafayette a century before.⁴

Yet nowhere in the ebullient accounts of the day, and their associated retrospectives on the past cataclysm, did one get an accurate reading of the unforeseen future. No one who participated in the Kansas City and Washington civic observances in 1921 really knew that a second, greater

conflict was less than two decades away. Although Foch had worried quite publicly immediately after the war about Germany's resurrection, such political and military concerns seemed to have no place on this trip and before these American audiences.⁵

Nor did this new generation of veterans anticipate that their world war would become as overlooked, under appreciated, even largely forgotten as it has become a few generations later. Now the fog of that collective amnesia may be lifting. Subsequent wars—World War II, Korea, Vietnam—have come and gone, along with the five-year blowout observances of the Second World War's various fiftieth anniversaries (1991–1995). In recent years, however, the dots have been connected; the legacy of World War I presents readily apparent ties to current events, maybe more so than the other twentieth-century American wars. Ethnic strife in the Balkans, intractable problems in Palestine, a mess in Mesopotamia, and questions of patriotism on the home

3. *Program of the Ceremonies Attending the Burial of an Unknown and Unidentified American Soldier Who Lost His Life during the World War*, National World War I Museum.

4. For the parallel, see "Foch's Tour Like Lafayette's: Allies' Commander Is Now Almost Duplicating American Travels of the Revolutionary Hero in 1824," *New York Times*, November 13, 1921.

5. Foch's actual words in 1919 were: "The next time, remember, the Germans will make no mistake. They will break through into Northern France and seize the Channel ports as a base of operations against England." Quotation from the *New York Times* in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 459.



An estimated crowd of almost 200,000 attended the November 1, 1921, ceremony to dedicate the hill south of Kansas City's Union Station.

front, all have roots or precedents to the first quarter of the twentieth century. Add to that a growing consensus among modern historians who see the two world wars not as separate episodes but merely as an elongated continuation with an all-too-brief intermission. Suddenly the world of the American doughboys has become almost distressingly relevant to understanding our world today.

Vestiges of that conflict can still be seen across the Kansas landscape. Fort Riley remains an important installation, as it was in 1917–1918 when its Camp Funston was a major training facility. The state continues to provide men and materiel to war efforts, its reputation as a food producer for the world remaining intact. And the memorials to Kansans who served in the world war, as documented later in this issue, are surprising in their number, extent, and imagination. Maybe the greatest change noted in one of the articles to follow is the decreased degree of influence that University of Kansas football plays in modern times.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to look at Kansas during World War I, the result being this wide-ranging collection

of articles on the experiences of the state's citizens during those years. That is one thread running throughout these contributions. Another is Kansas City's Liberty Memorial, whose founders went on from that 1921 site dedication to see it to a 1926 completion, although without an appearance by Marshal Foch. Seven decades of operation—with varying levels of success—followed, along with such recent milestones as a 2002 renovation and rededication and a 2004 federal designation as the National World War I Museum.⁶ The year 2006 sees the completion of a massive physical expansion of the museum's exhibition, educational, and research spaces, a bi-state cultural asset with national aspirations.

As a major repository for World War I historical materials, it seems appropriate that many of the illustrations on the

6. The federal legislation that designated the Liberty Memorial as America's National World War I Museum was a part of the massive Defense Authorization bill that President George W. Bush signed into law in 2004.

following pages come from the Liberty Memorial's comprehensive museum, archival, and library collections. Some of the articles were inspired by and drawn from these holdings as well, although the researcher on World War I-era history and culture also has a cluster of other institutions to draw upon. The Kansas State Historical Society, the University of Kansas, the Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection and university archives of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and the National Archives and Records Administration-Central Plains Region all hold significant materials of statewide and regional importance on this subject. One hopes that all of these institutions may benefit from increased attention to the role of World War I in American history. This theme issue of *Kansas History* reflects that hope.

Two army divisions, with a significant percentage of their ranks composed of Kansans, drew considerable public interest at the time and continue to attract the attention of historians. Sandra Reddish tracks the military service of one Eighty-ninth Division regiment in "An 'All Kansas' Regiment—The 353d Infantry Goes to War." The story of this state unit, which saw action on the western front, has been repeated across the nation. Robert H. Ferrell examines the more controversial roles of the Thirty-fifth Division in

the largest battle in which American troops participated—the Meuse-Argonne offensive of September 1918—and of the regiment's Kansas champion in "Angered to the Core: Henry J. Allen and the U.S. Army."

Kansas at wartime can be dramatically presented through both vintage images and the words of individual citizens who saw service. Jonathan Casey's "Training in Kansas for a World War: Camp Funston in Photographs" and Doran L. Cart's "Kansas Football 'Over There'" offer photo essays to trace two visually rich stories that possess strong and continuing home-front connections. Cart also presents the wartime letters of an army nurse, a Chanute native who did not wait for an American declaration of war to go to Europe; she subsequently left us an all-too-rare woman's perspective on the western front in "'With the Tommies': A Kansas Nurse in the British Expeditionary Force, 1918—The Letters of Florence Edith Hemphill."

Steven Trout fittingly concludes this collection of articles with "Forgotten Reminders: Kansas World War I Memorials." The war seems to have left those who lived through it nearly as perplexed as modern generations, all struggling to put it in context. How should we remember it? How should we honor those who served and died? And a question that faces us today: how do we learn from World War I? KH