

# 16 Montana and World War I

## 1914-1918

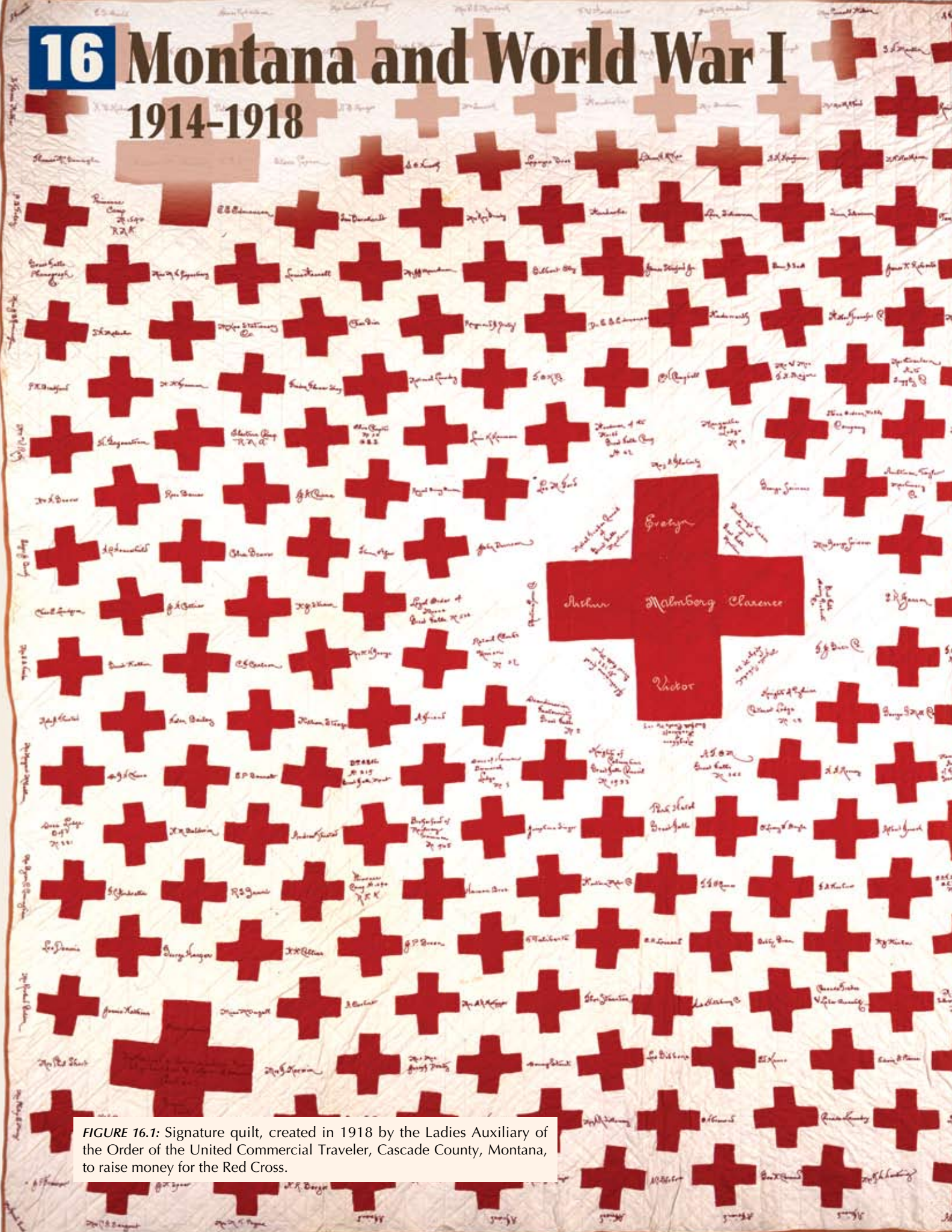
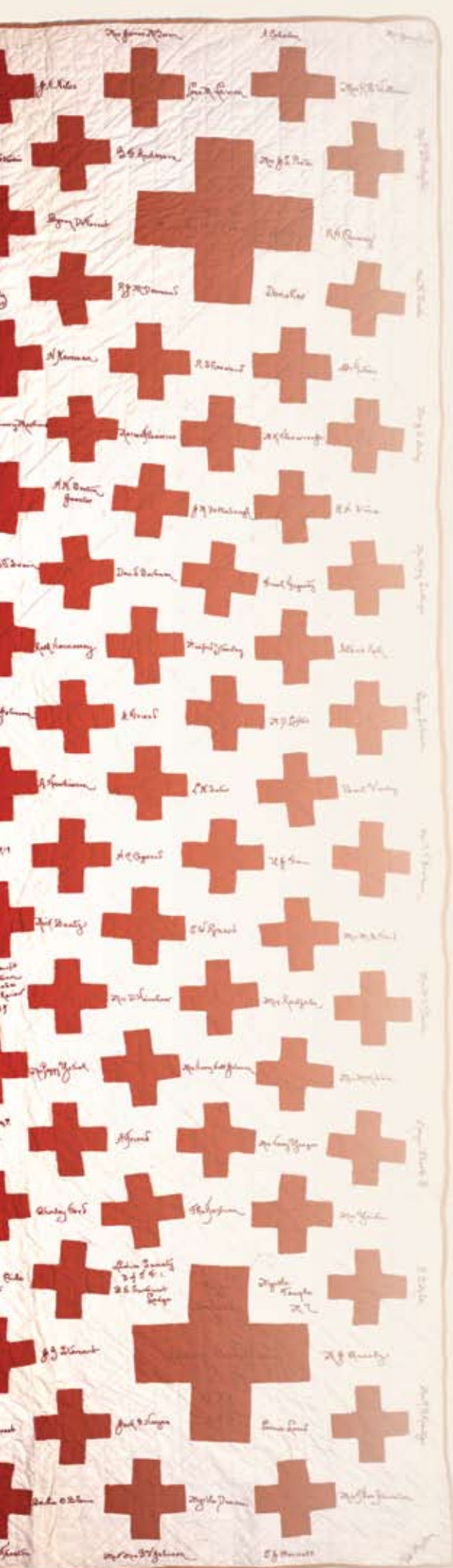


FIGURE 16.1: Signature quilt, created in 1918 by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Order of the United Commercial Traveler, Cascade County, Montana, to raise money for the Red Cross.





## READ TO FIND OUT:

- How war in Europe affected life in Montana
- Why working conditions worsened during wartime
- What made some Montanans turn against one another
- Why a Lewistown mob burned books on Main Street in 1918

## The Big Picture

Montana sent a higher percentage of soldiers, money, and resources to World War I than any other state. At home people worked harder, produced more, and lived on less. Meanwhile, some Montanans turned against their neighbors in one of the most complicated episodes in Montana history.

Imagine you are one of 12 children on a homestead on Sarpy Creek, east of Billings. One day you watch your father hauled into court. A few neighbors testify that they overheard your father say that even if he were drafted he would not go to war.

That day your father is sentenced to two to four years in the state prison for **sedition** (speech or conduct that encourages rebellion against the government). After that, your mother loses the family homestead because she cannot make bank payments. You and your 11 brothers and sisters are sent to orphanages. Some of them you will never see again.

Could this ever happen in Montana? It did happen to the family of Fay and Sarah Rumsey and their 12 children—and to others as well.

It was 1918. The world was at war. American soldiers were dying in Europe. Here at home, a drought was just beginning to parch the land, starve out the homesteaders, and drive most of Montana's farmers to despair. And then Americans started dying of influenza—first by the hundreds, then by the thousands.

It was a complicated time—one of the most complex chapters in Montana's story. People viewed their world with hope and optimism, and Progressive reforms swept Montana and the nation (see Chapter 15). Yet, at the same time, fear and suspicion turned many neighbors against one another.

The U.S. government sent soldiers to fight for freedom, while sending its citizens to prison for exercising their freedoms. At the same time that Montana gave individuals a stronger voice in government, it also sent people to prison simply for expressing commonly held opinions.

A terrible conflict lay at the center of these puzzles: worldwide war.

## 1914: War Begins in Europe

**FIGURE 16.2:** Artist Fred Spear painted this drowning mother and child to create outrage against the sinking of the *Lusitania* and sympathy for the British cause. Britain also cut the transatlantic communications cable connecting the United States with Germany, so the only news reports Americans received came through England. Three years after the war began, the United States joined forces with England.



In 1914 a young Bosnian **assassinated** (killed) Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. You might not think a murder thousands of miles away would have a big effect in Montana—but it did. Ferdinand’s assassination triggered a string of events that quickly escalated into a world war.

The war in Europe created a sudden demand for Montana’s metals, lumber, and wheat. Great Britain and France were traditional allies of the United States, so the United States began shipping an enormous amount of food and materials across the Atlantic Ocean to help England and France.

Montana’s mines, sawmills, and farms all increased production to meet the demand. And in Miles City, the U.S. Army’s Cavalry Remount Station (where military horses were bred and trained) leapt into action, training 10,000 horses for the war—more than any other army post in the country.

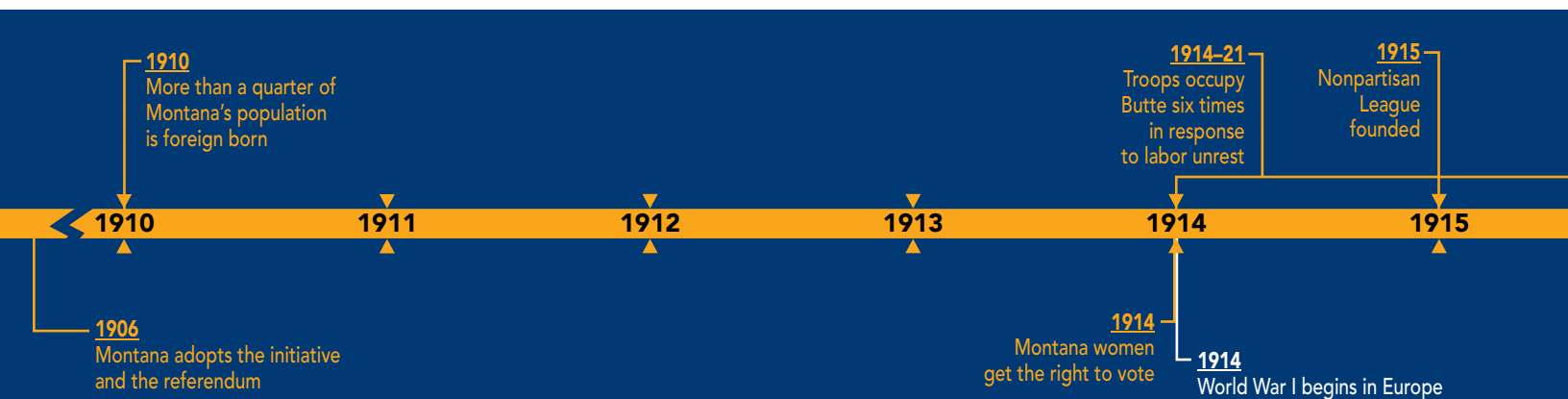
### Should the United States Join the War?

At first the United States tried to talk both sides into peace. Both England and Germany began pressuring the United States for military help. Then, in 1915, a German submarine torpedoed the British-owned passenger ship *Lusitania*, killing 1,198 passengers, including 128 Americans. Germany also sank several U.S. merchant ships.

The deaths of Americans shifted public opinion. Many people felt that the only way to stop Germany was to join the war and fight on the side of England and France.

On April 6, 1917, Jeannette Rankin strode into the halls of Congress to vote on whether or not the United States should join World War I. She was one of Montana’s two congressional representatives—and the first woman ever elected to the U.S. Congress (see Chapter 15). The nation watched this woman to see what she would do.

Most of Rankin’s friends supported the war, including



her brother, Wellington, who was her closest advisor. Feminists wanted her to show that women could be as tough as men. Yet Rankin had run for Congress because she believed that if women gained political power, they would stop wars. She did not want to be the first woman in American history to vote for war.

When her turn came, Rankin stood up. “I want to stand by my country but I cannot vote for war,” she said. Only a few other members of Congress shared her view, and the resolution to enter World War I passed overwhelmingly.

Rankin’s vote enraged Montanans who felt passionately that America should go to war. The *Helena Independent* called her “a crying schoolgirl.” Many agreed with President Woodrow Wilson, who said that “right is more precious than peace” and that the United States was fighting to “make the world safe for democracy.”

Not all Montanans supported the war. Many homesteaders were German immigrants who loved their homeland. Many Irish people also opposed the war. England had been trying to take over Ireland for centuries. The last thing Irish Americans wanted was to risk their lives to fight for England. And Montana’s **pacifists** (people who are opposed to violence for any reason) also opposed war.

The IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) labor union opposed the war, too. IWW members (also called Wobblies) saw how much money factory and mine owners could make from the war. They called World War I “a rich man’s war.” The working class already gave its sweat to make the company owners rich. Why should they sacrifice their lives, too?

The war—and people’s differing attitudes about the war—plunged Montana into a time of widespread tension.

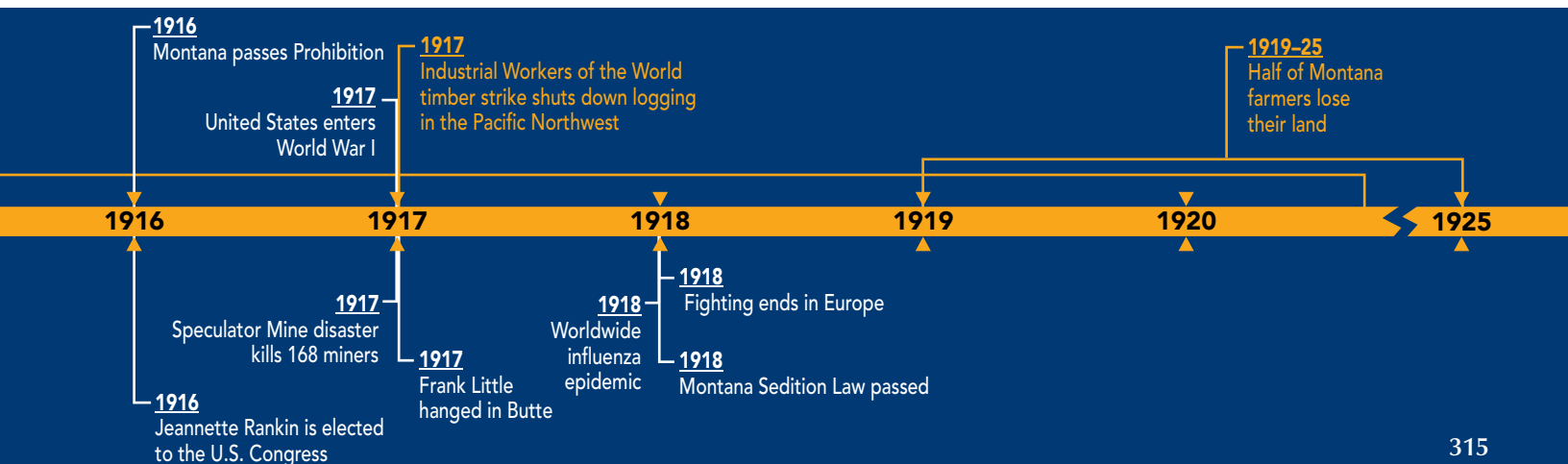
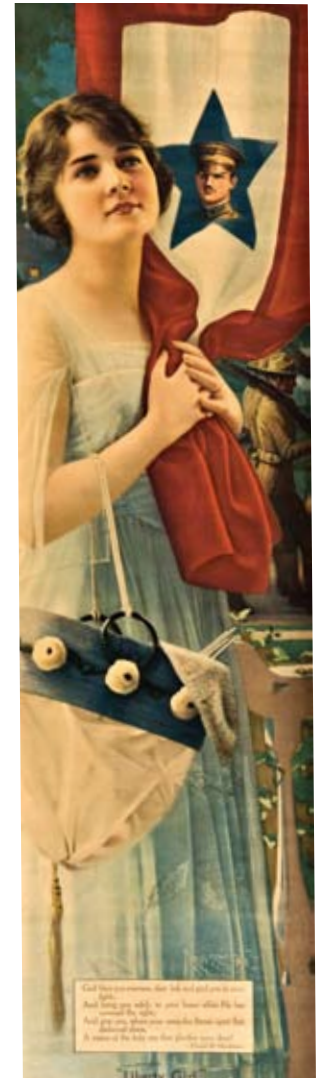
## Drumming Up Support for the War

President Wilson knew that most Americans were not sure about entering the war. So he created the federal Committee for Public Information. This office produced **propaganda** (information designed to persuade people of something) encouraging men to enlist in the military and

“You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.”

—JEANNETTE RANKIN

FIGURE 16.3: Producers of soap, clothing, and household products used images like this one in their advertisements to inspire patriotism and support for the war.





urging everyone to support the war. The committee flooded the nation with posters, flyers, advertisements, magazine articles—even Hollywood movies—depicting heroic soldiers and the noble cause of the war.

Then the president asked each state to create a Council of Defense. These councils worked at the state level to recruit soldiers, encourage farmers to increase food production, and increase public support for the war.

Montana Governor Samuel V. Stewart created the Montana Council of Defense. This council formed smaller councils in each county. Many towns also formed Loyalty Committees to sell **liberty bonds** (savings certificates that the government sold to raise money for the war) and to encourage everyone to support the war. Individual businesses hung propaganda posters in their windows and workrooms. In 1917 just about everywhere you went you would see some reminder of the importance of the war.

## 1917: Montana Goes to War

When asked to give to the war effort, Montana gave. More than 12,500 Montanans volunteered for military service. The government, overestimating Montana's population, drafted another 28,000. Nearly 40,000 men—10 percent of the state's population—went to war, a greater percentage than from any other state.

American Indians across the country sent a high percentage of men, too. Many Indians were not technically U.S. citizens, so at first they had to fight for the right to enlist in the military. Eventually, 12,000 to 15,000

*FIGURE 16.4:* World War I was the first major war that used airplanes as armies' "eyes in the skies." William Belzer of Glasgow, pictured here, served with the 135th Air Squadron in France. Airmen sometimes called the planes "flaming coffins" because they exploded when hit by enemy fire.



American Indians served in the war. Military service offered young men action, employment, and much-needed income. It also offered something they found nowhere else in **mainstream** (majority) society: status.

Crow chief Plenty Coups encouraged young Crow men to enlist. "This is your chance to prove that you are warriors, just as your fathers and grandfathers were in the old days," he told Crow youth. "But this is a *new day*, with new ways of counting coup and proving your manhood. You are Americans—the *first Americans!* Be proud of that."

### Farms Expand to Feed the War

The war turned Europe's farmlands into battlegrounds and its farmers into soldiers. As a result some European countries suffered a serious food shortage in 1917. They turned to America for their food. The increased demand drove Montana's wheat prices sky-high. The government—and local banks—encouraged farmers to go into debt to expand their farms.

Farmers plowed up as much land as they could to plant more wheat. On Indian **reservations** (land that tribes had reserved for their own use through treaties), the federal government leased out more than 200,000 acres of Indian land to non-Indian farmers to produce more food. Homesteaders borrowed money to buy more land, equipment, seed, and livestock. Most homesteaders were willing to take on heavy debt to support the war. They also wanted to expand their farms while wheat prices were high.

### Full Speed Ahead for Miners and Loggers

Montana's mines and smelters increased production of copper, lead, and zinc for guns, bullet casings, ships, communication lines, and military supplies. Mines operated 24 hours a day—and made huge profits. During

FIGURE 16.5: The government encouraged Americans to expand their farms, plant extra crops, cultivate home gardens, and conserve food at home. This poster encourages recent immigrants from Europe not to waste food.







**FIGURE 16.6:** Machine drills increased productivity, but they also filled the mine tunnels with fine rock dust that scarred miners' lungs. Miners called the machine drills "widowmakers" because they caused so many miners to die from lung disease.

the war years the Anaconda Copper Mining Company earned the fourth-largest profits in the entire nation.

To keep profits high, the company pressured the miners to put "rock in the box"—to move **ore** (rock containing precious metals) as fast as they could. New mining technologies like air drills and steam-powered **hoists** (devices for lifting) helped to speed production. These new machines allowed mines to hire more unskilled labor. But dangerous machines and inexperienced workers also caused far more industrial accidents (see Chapter 15).

War-time **inflation** (higher prices) increased the cost of living and ate up more of the miners' paychecks than ever. While the Company's profits skyrocketed, miners' wages did not rise enough to keep up with inflation. The price of food in Butte increased 41 percent in two years. Rents doubled. Most miners had to borrow money just to live. The miners grew poorer and poorer, even though they were working harder and faster than ever.

The logging industry, too, quickened its pace to supply lumber for ships, airplane hangars, and military construction. Loggers and mill workers worked long days. They slept in almost unbearable work camps with bedbugs and lice. New machines, like an overhead cable system for moving logs, improved efficiency, but they required experience and skill to operate well. With so many new, unskilled workers, injuries increased.

### **Montana Gave in Other Ways, Too**

While farmers planted bumper crops and miners worked extra shifts to support the war effort, women around the state formed Red Cross Auxiliaries. They rolled bandages, knitted socks, and planted "victory gardens" to produce their own food so that more agricultural products could go to the war effort. The government even asked everyone in the nation to eat less so more food could be sent to soldiers at the front. Families ate cottage cheese instead of meat and used corn meal instead of flour. They scrimped on butter and sugar.

Nearly everyone bought liberty bonds. Each bond certificate had a

guaranteed interest rate. When buyers cashed in the bonds—usually after ten years—they got their money back plus interest. Through liberty bonds, the government could borrow money from the people to fund the war. Bond drives also made people feel as if they were helping the war effort.

### Patriotism Builds

With 40,000 of its sons at war and so many resources committed to the war effort, Montana sizzled in a patriotic fever. Newspapers trumpeted praise for the war effort—and for the Company, which supplied the military.

Will Campbell, editor of the *Helena Independent*, was more **strident** (strong and urgent) than most. Campbell, who also served on the state Council of Defense, wrote fiery editorials condemning anyone who did not support the war. He accused foreigners of being spies. He whipped Montanans into a frenzy of suspicion.

On September 9, 1917, Campbell wrote, “Are the Germans about to bomb the capital of Montana? . . . Do our enemies fly around over our high mountains where formerly only the shadow of the eagle swept?” He offered \$100 to anyone who could spot German aircraft circling over Helena. Editorials like this made people start fearing one another.

Patriotic **fever** (passion) swept across Montana. At a Patriot’s Day parade in Lewistown, former congressman Thomas Stout announced that the nation could not tolerate people who were neutral about the war. “With our sacred honor and our liberties at stake, there can be but two classes of American citizens: patriots and traitors!” he shouted at the crowd.



FIGURE 16.7: Children joined in parades and other events organized to inspire support for the war. Young Hazel Odegard of Great Falls dressed up like a Red Cross volunteer and waved her flag for this photo on the Fourth of July, 1919.

FIGURE 16.8: How could growing a garden help a war thousands of miles away? The government asked citizens to grow “victory gardens” for their own food so that more commercially produced food could go to feed soldiers and the Allies.





“We are today either loyal citizens of this, our native or adopted land, or else we are traitors.”

—MONTANA GOVERNOR SAMUEL V. STEWART, 1918

### A Few Patriots Go to Extremes

County committees of the Montana Council of Defense began patrolling for spies in their communities. They encouraged people to report anyone who seemed suspicious, foreign, or unpatriotic. Suspicion spread among neighbors and townspeople. Neighbors began reporting one another for offenses like not buying enough liberty bonds. One man was turned in just because he spoke German and seemed to have a lot of money.

A teacher in Rexford, in Lincoln County, was fired because he did not buy war bonds. The state revoked his teaching credentials. In Lewistown the sheriff prohibited foreign-born citizens from even talking about current events in public.

In Helena, U.S. attorney Burton K. Wheeler began receiving reports—ten a day, he said—of disloyal citizens who had spoken out against the war. Wheeler dismissed most of these reports as gossip. But the reports increased—and so did pressure on Wheeler to prosecute people for speaking their opinions. Fear and suspicion laid the groundwork for what happened next.

## Butte Explodes

Just before midnight on June 8, 1917, a fire in the Speculator Mine caused the worst disaster in the history of hard-rock mining. A shift boss working deep in the mine leaned forward to inspect a damaged electrical cable and accidentally lit the cable's cloth insulation on fire with the headlamp on his hardhat. Flames swept up the mineshaft from timber to timber, fanned by the mine's ventilation system. The main shaft became a fountain of flame, **incinerating** (burning up) two miners in the **hoist cage** (a steel elevator that took men down into a mine). The fire pressed smoke, carbon monoxide, and other poisonous gases into every corner of the mine.

Some men died from the gases before they knew what had happened. Others formed human chains to feel their way into crosscuts, where tunnels intersected with passageways to adjacent mines. But concrete **bulkheads** (walls dividing shafts belonging to different mines) blocked their escape. **Manholes** (iron escape holes), required by state law for just such emergencies, had not been installed. When miners' bodies were found, many of their fingers were scraped to the bone from trying to claw around the concrete.

The disaster killed 168 miners and injured dozens more. Men wrote farewell notes to their wives and children on scraps of paper and tucked them into their own pockets before they died.

The Speculator Mine disaster enraged the miners of Butte. As laborers gathered to mourn the dead, they organized a new labor union called the

Metal Mine Workers' Union. It was formed to replace the Butte Miner's Union, which was mostly controlled by the Company (see Chapter 10).

The Metal Mine Workers' Union pledged to avoid violence. They demanded better working conditions and a raise from \$4.75 per day (about \$75 today) to \$6.00 per day. They asked for regular safety inspections and manholes in every bulkhead. They also demanded an end to the **rustling card**

**system** (the Anaconda Company's system of requiring a Company-issued card before a miner could get work), which was the Company's way of controlling its employees. Under the rustling card system, anyone who caused trouble for the Company, or demanded better working conditions, lost his rustling card and could not work.

On June 11 the miners of Butte went on **strike** (an organized protest in which workers refuse to work). Butte's other trade unions joined them. By the end of June, 15,000 men were on strike. They shut down the Anaconda Copper Mining Company.

The Company refused to bargain with the new union. It called union members unpatriotic. It demanded government protection, claiming that the strike directly harmed the U.S. war effort. And since the Company also controlled many of Montana's newspapers, it made sure that most news articles told the Company's side of the story. According to the Company-controlled newspapers, Butte miners had no real complaints. Instead, the newspapers blamed the strike on outside trouble-makers and called labor unionists traitors. Because there were so few independent newspapers, most Montanans never heard the miners' side of the argument. They believed what the newspapers said.

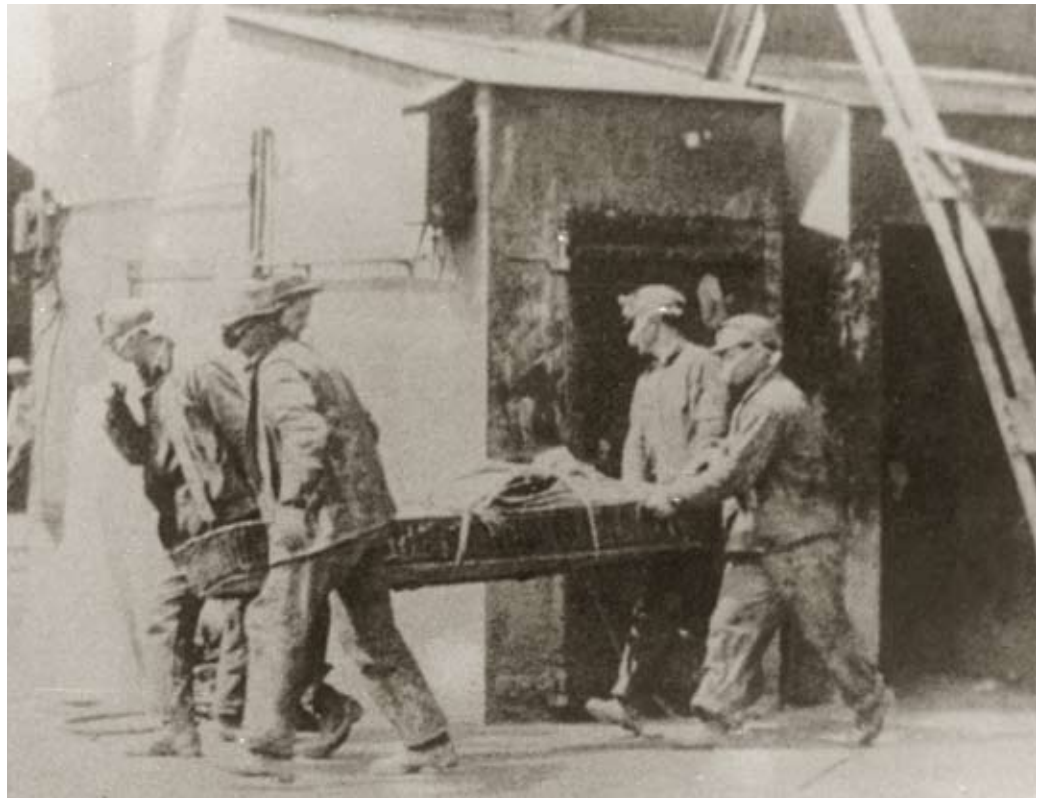
## "We Are All Waiting for the End"

"Dear Pet:

Well, we are all waiting for the end . . . I guess it won't be long . . . We take turns rapping on the pipe, so if the rescue crew's around they will hear us . . . There is a young fellow here, Clarence Marthey. He has a wife and two kiddies. Tell her we done the best we could . . . Goodbye little loving wife."

—LAST NOTES BY SHIFT BOSS J. D. MOORE, FOUND IN HIS POCKET WHEN HIS BODY WAS RECOVERED FROM THE SPECULATOR MINE (MOORE DIED JUST BEFORE THE REST OF THE CREW WAS RESCUED.)

FIGURE 16.9: As miners removed bodies of the victims of the 1917 Speculator Mine disaster, Butte struggled to come to terms with the worst hard-rock mining disaster in the nation's history.





## Frank Little: Death of a Wobbly

Into the middle of this conflict came a leader of the IWW named Frank Little. People called Little “half Cherokee, half white, and all Wobbly” because he was so dedicated to workers’ rights. He spoke on street corners about better working conditions and about free speech—the constitutional right to speak out in favor of change. He also condemned the war. He said that poor men were fighting and dying just to make rich men richer.

Little’s appearance agitated Butte even more. He infuriated Company supporters. He also enraged patriotic union laborers who supported the war.

On August 1, six men burst into the rooming house where Frank Little slept. They dragged him from his bed and hanged him from the Anaconda railroad trestle.

Panic swept Butte. The governor sent in military troops to occupy the city. With armed soldiers in the streets, many people no longer dared to speak out against the war or even complain about the Company. The strike fizzled out, and the miners went back to work. Their wages and working conditions did not change. The deaths of 186 miners, the murder of Frank Little, the failed strike, and the troops in the streets added more tension to Butte’s wartime anxiety.

## 1918: A Year of Fear and Frenzy

By early 1918 many Montanans were scared. They believed the warnings that spies might lurk among them. Many people called for stricter laws to protect law-abiding citizens from foreign agents and traitors.

In February 1918 the **legislature** (the branch of government that

*FIGURE 16.10:* Governor Samuel V. Stewart sent National Guard troops to Butte several times between 1914 and 1921 to settle labor unrest.



passes laws) held a special session. It made the Montana Council of Defense an official state agency. It gave council members authority to investigate anyone they wanted and to decide their punishment if they found them guilty. No one had authority over the council, and there was no way to appeal its actions. The council had absolute power.

The council also wrote a set of rules for all Montanans to follow in wartime. These rules prohibited activities like parades, dances, public assemblies—even building outdoor fires. They required any man who did not have a full-time job to register with local authorities as a **vagrant** (a bum or a slacker).

The council prohibited speaking the German language in schools, churches, or even at private gatherings. The thousands of German-speaking immigrants who populated homesteads and farming towns made up one of Montana's largest ethnic groups. Yet they were not allowed to speak their own language—even in church—for two years.

The state Council of Defense primarily attacked socialists, the IWW, and the farmer's organization called the Nonpartisan League (see Chapter 15). It also targeted pacifists and people of German ancestry—and were especially hard on Mennonites, who were pacifists and spoke German.

### Montana's Sedition Law

The 1918 legislature also passed a series of unusual laws in Montana. One was a gun registration law requiring all citizens who owned guns to register them with the county sheriff.

Another was the Montana Sedition Law. This law made it illegal to say or write anything critical of the federal or state government, the military, the war, or any war programs. This law made it illegal to express opposition to the war in any way.

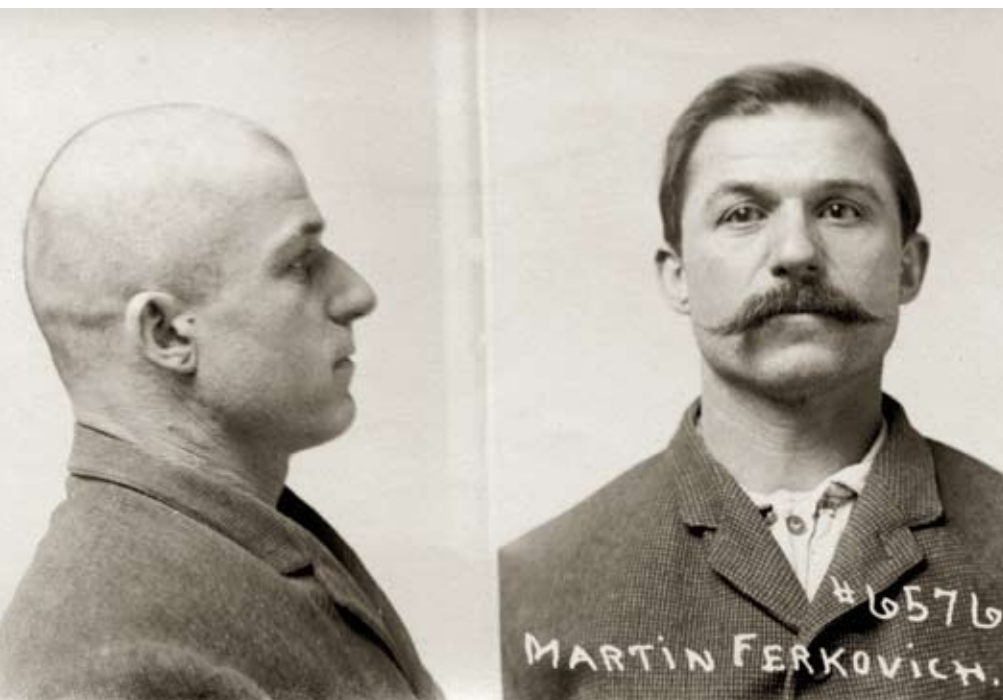
One reason the sedition

**They Could Not Pray in Their Own Language**  
“Dear Governor Stewart:  
“I wish to write to you Mr. Stewart of something which lies deep in my heart. Sometime ago the State Council of Defense made an Order preventing the use of the German language in schools and churches . . . We have many who are unable to understand the English language and it's hard for these people . . . What they miss more than anything else is their prayer meetings and if our preaching shall be in English, cannot we hold our prayer meeting in German?”  
—REVEREND J. E. SCHATZ, MINISTER IN PLEVNA (GOVERNOR STEWART REPLIED: “NO.”)

FIGURE 16.11: This German-Lutheran congregation in Marsh began collecting money for their new church in 1914. But they were not allowed to hold church services in German during the war. They did not complete their new building until 1920, two years after the war ended.







**FIGURE 16.12:** Martin Ferkovich, a coal miner near Roundup, was arrested because he allegedly told someone in a saloon that he would not fight in the war. “Austria is my country, and I won’t fight against her,” Ferkovich was accused of saying. “I wouldn’t shoot my own brother.”

law was so significant was that it directly opposed the First Amendment to the U.S. Bill of Rights. The First Amendment protects people’s rights to free speech and to practice religion in their own way.

Have you ever criticized the government, a law, or a rule? Imagine going to jail for saying those things. You might be accused of sedition under this 1918 law.

Two hundred Montanans were arrested—and 47 served time in the state penitentiary. Some were sentenced to 20 years or more and paid fines from \$2,000 to \$20,000 (\$26,000 to \$260,000 today).

One of them was Janet Smith, a Powder River County homesteader’s wife and the postmistress of Sayle. She was accused of saying to neighbors that she wished people would protest the war and that she would rather turn her livestock out into the crops than help the government. Janet Smith was sentenced to five to ten years in prison.

Janet’s husband, W. K. Smith, was turned in for refusing to attend Red Cross meetings. One neighbor testified that when a local boy was killed at war, Smith had said, “What do you expect? That’s what you sent him away for, to get slaughtered.” W. K. Smith was sentenced to 10 to 20 years and fined \$20,000—equal to about \$260,000 today. The council sold the Smiths’ homestead to pay the fine.

People quickly figured out that they could turn in their neighbors for any reason. They used the Loyalty Committee to settle feuds or to remove people from office they did not like.

Ernest Starr, a homesteader near Hardin, was reading a letter in the post office when 15 Loyalty Committee members surrounded him and tried to force him to kiss the flag to prove his loyalty. “I will not kiss that thing,” Starr said. “It might be covered with **microbes** [germs].” He was sentenced to 10 to 20 years, plus a \$500 fine.

Later in 1918, the U.S. Congress used Montana’s sedition law as a model for a federal sedition law. This federal law silenced public expression of antiwar opinion all across the country. Many historians now consider it one of the most widespread violations of **civil liberties** (fundamental individual rights) in twentieth-century America.

### **Hysteria Spreads**

In Lewistown, the tension and fear exploded in one afternoon in March 1918. Five hundred residents gathered at the Lewistown Free High

School. They took German textbooks from the school library, piled them in the middle of Main Street, and burned them as the crowd sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." The crowd then rounded up citizens suspected of being disloyal. They threatened to hang one man and forced several others to swear an oath of loyalty to the United States. That evening 2,000 people crowded downtown to cheer at patriotic speeches.

In Glendive, patriots nearly hanged a German Mennonite minister because his religion called him to be a pacifist. Mobs came close to hanging men in Billings, Missoula, and Bozeman, too, before the hysteria ended.

Similar events happened all over the country—even in the military. Four Hutterite men who had been drafted refused to wear uniforms or engage in war activities because it was against their religion. Hutterites are people of German ancestry who share commitment to their pacifist religion and their communities. The four were sent to prison, where they were tortured—two of them died. After that, many Hutterite colonies moved to Canada to protect their men.

### Some Speak Out against Hyper-patriotism

Not everyone was caught up in the hysteria of **hyper-patriotism** (loyalty to a person's country taken to an extreme level). U.S. district attorney Burton K. Wheeler refused to prosecute people for sedition based on false or unconvincing evidence. Even when he himself was hauled before the Montana Council of Defense, Wheeler stood his ground. He said it was not a crime to speak with an accent or to have an opinion. After that, Council of Defense members tried to get Wheeler removed from his position.

Judge George M. Bourquin of the Butte District Court refused to convict people for their opinions about the war. He believed strongly in the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. When a Rosebud County rancher was arrested for saying he was not in favor of war, Judge Bourquin found him not guilty.

Judge Charles L. Crum

### "I Felt This Was So Wrong"

"They nearly hung a man, and he was going to be thrown into the Spring Creek. When my sister and I came to the scene, they were calling for the ropes. I can still remember how I felt . . . I was just a kid then, but I felt this was so wrong because this was our United States, which was supposed to be free, and we could do as we wished as far as buying bonds were concerned."

—NORMA HANSON GILMORE, WHO WAS A LEWISTOWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IN 1918

FIGURE 16.13: Students watched townspeople burn German-language textbooks on Main Street in Lewistown on March 27, 1918.





## Burton K. Wheeler: Protector of Civil Liberties

Burton K. Wheeler became a voice of reason during the troublesome years of World War I. Wheeler was a Progressive (see Chapter 15) and believed strongly in the democratic process of government. Throughout his career he worked to reduce the Anaconda Copper Mining Company's power over Montana politics and to champion people's **civil rights** (fundamental rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution).

Wheeler was elected to the legislature in 1911. Two years later he was appointed U.S. district attorney in Butte, which made him responsible for prosecuting people accused of sedition in 1918. But Wheeler refused to violate people's civil liberties, even in wartime. Patriots got so mad at Wheeler that they called him "Bolshevik Burt," after the Russian Communist party. Wheeler resigned his post in 1918, at the height of wartime fervor. But his political career was not over. In 1922 Montanans elected him to the U.S. Senate.



was a German American district court judge in Forsyth who strongly believed in Americans' constitutional right to free speech. He sometimes gave legal advice to people accused of sedition. This enraged members of the Council of Defense, who demanded that the legislature **impeach** (bring charges against) Judge Crum. In February 1918 the legislature removed him from office. (In 1991 the Montana legislature voted unanimously to restore Judge Crum's name to honor.)

## A Strange and Terrible Illness

In the midst of tremendous turmoil, a very different killer struck: influenza. In 1918 a deadly influenza virus spread around the world. It killed as many as 100 million people worldwide. In the United States, more than 675,000 people died. It was—and still is—the worst **epidemic** (rapid spread of disease) the United States has ever known.

This was no everyday flu. A person could be healthy at breakfast, wracked by fever within two hours, and dead by suppertime. A victim's lungs filled up with fluid. Blood vessels burst, turning the skin black and blue. High fever brought excruciating pain, delirium, and hallucinations. The disease baffled doctors and scientists. They did not know much about viruses in 1918.

Influenza swept across the country in waves, killing mostly adults in the prime of life—between ages 20 and 40. October was the worst month. In 31 days influenza killed nearly 200,000 Americans. Hospitals overflowed. Funeral homes ran out of caskets. Kids your age wandered the streets of cities, suddenly orphaned.

In Montana, the flu spread along the railroads. In a span of six weeks beginning in late October, there were 20,000 cases reported, and 3,222 Montanans died. There might be 50 people sick in one town, and none at all in the next town over. People feared the virus, which killed mostly

the young and strong. Some people thought it was a German plot to defeat the United States.

In Bozeman, a family named Brown lost three children—11, 13, and 15 years old—in two days. In Miles City, a man ventured over to a neighbor's home and discovered all five members of the family dead—starved to death, too sick to care for one another.

Towns turned hotels and saloons into hospitals. People took turns doctoring one another. In Choteau, Dr. Ernest Maynard visited victims tirelessly for days on end and did not lose one patient. Dr. Alfred Dogge of Polson volunteered to go to Rapelje, where there were no doctors. He set up emergency hospitals and helped townspeople treat more than 300 victims; only five died. In Havre, Episcopal minister Lenant Christler checked in on remote farms and ranches. At one he found an entire family of 11 with raging fevers. He heated water, bathed them all, changed their clothes, and left medicine—and they all recovered.

The Montana Department of Health encouraged local officials to close schools, saloons, churches, and other places where people gathered. County governments disinfected public buildings, swept the streets, and told local businesses to shut down.

Influenza hit hardest on Indian reservations, where most families shared tiny, poorly ventilated houses. Most of the Indian Health Service doctors were away at war. While American Indian adults suffered at home, their children were even more likely to catch the virus at the Indian boarding schools.

The 1918 influenza epidemic killed more people than all the wars of the twentieth century combined, and many times more than the bubonic plague of the Middle Ages. Fewer than 1,000 Montanans died on the battlefields of World War I. But 5,000 Montanans—one in every 100—died from influenza. Montana's death toll from influenza (as a percentage of the population) was the fourth highest in the nation.

## The Nation Digs In and Moves On

World War I ended on November 11, 1918. The influenza epidemic sputtered out by January 1919. Montanans were elated that the United States and its allies had won the war and were relieved that the epidemic was over. But they wondered what would happen next.

Demand for the state's natural resources fell to its prewar levels. Prices

**“Do you know that this is the most peculiar disease I have ever seen? Some persons hardly know they are sick until they're dying. We have had only three fatalities in Glasgow, but Malta and Wolf Point are suffering dreadfully.”**

—PAMELIA A. CLARK, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE FRANCES MAHON DEACONESS HOSPITAL IN GLASGOW, 1918

**“My first reaction to the end of the epidemic was a personal letdown. For throughout this experience I had really lived. I had lived deeply. A great truth came to me and I realized that the best use you can make of your life is to be involved in something greater than yourself.”**

—MAY VONTVER, WHO VOLUNTEERED AS A NURSE AT A SPECIAL INFLUENZA HOSPITAL OUTSIDE LEWISTOWN IN 1918





FIGURE 16.14: The people of Cascade County gave these badges to Montana's returning troops in thanks for their service in World War I.

dropped and people lost jobs. A devastating and long-lasting drought drove 70,000 homesteaders off the land. Many of Montana's homesteaders who might have survived the drought were driven under by their wartime debt.

Soldiers returned from the war to find their farms ruined by drought, farm towns shriveling up, families destitute, and jobs hard to find. Many of them came back to homes where family members had died from influenza. A few, like the son of Janet and W. K. Smith, returned from war to find their parents in prison and their homesteads sold off.

Bitterness between people was hard to stop once it started. Even after the war ended, Montana kept its ban on speaking German in public into the 1920s. Many American Indian war heroes returned to **prejudice** (a pre-formed negative opinion) and poverty at home. And no one arrested for sedition during the war was released when the war was over. All of them served out their sentences.

The difficulties of this period challenged some people to their limits. Yet at the same time, many people like the Progressives were also working hard to improve society and make life better for their children (see Chapter 15).

And over time Montanans learned from past mistakes. In May 2006 Governor Brian Schweitzer pardoned 42 Montanans who had been imprisoned under Montana's sedition law. (Some had been pardoned earlier.) Some of their children and grandchildren traveled to Montana for the event. At the pardon ceremony Governor Schweitzer said, "I'm going to say what Governor Sam Stewart should have said: I'm sorry, forgive me, and God bless America, because we can criticize our government."



FIGURE 16.15: Drew Briner, grandson of Herman Bausch, reads from a diary his grandfather kept in prison after he was convicted of sedition in 1918. Briner shared the diary as part of the 2006 ceremony pardoning Montanans imprisoned for speaking out against World War I.

# How It Worked

## War Propaganda

How do you convince a nation of people to go to war? Every country that participated in World War I printed propaganda posters to make people more willing to give food, money—even their lives—for the war effort.

Media can inform, persuade, or entertain us. It can be used in positive or negative ways. Propaganda is any media that seeks to persuade its audience by promoting a particular belief or point of view. It is designed to shape public opinion by making you feel or think a certain way. Most advertising, for example, is propaganda designed to make you want to buy something.

War propaganda posters were effective because they were easily distributed, they stayed visible (unlike a TV commercial today), and their graphic messages were easily understandable even to people who could not read.

The United States produced more than 2,500 different posters during World War I—more than all the other countries in the war combined. Posters encouraged people to join the military, buy war bonds, donate money to the Red Cross, and support the war effort by working



*FIGURE 16.16:* The American Red Cross issued this poster in 1918 to encourage Americans to donate money for Red Cross activities during World War I. It shows a uniformed, white-skinned nurse's arm descending from the heavens to protect a group of injured people who might be refugees. Outside her protective arm, war planes and bombers buzz through the skies. At the top, opposite the bright red cross (the international symbol of medical help), the type describes the hand as a "Hand of Mercy." Along the bottom the type reads "One hundred million dollars," anchoring the image like a foundation.



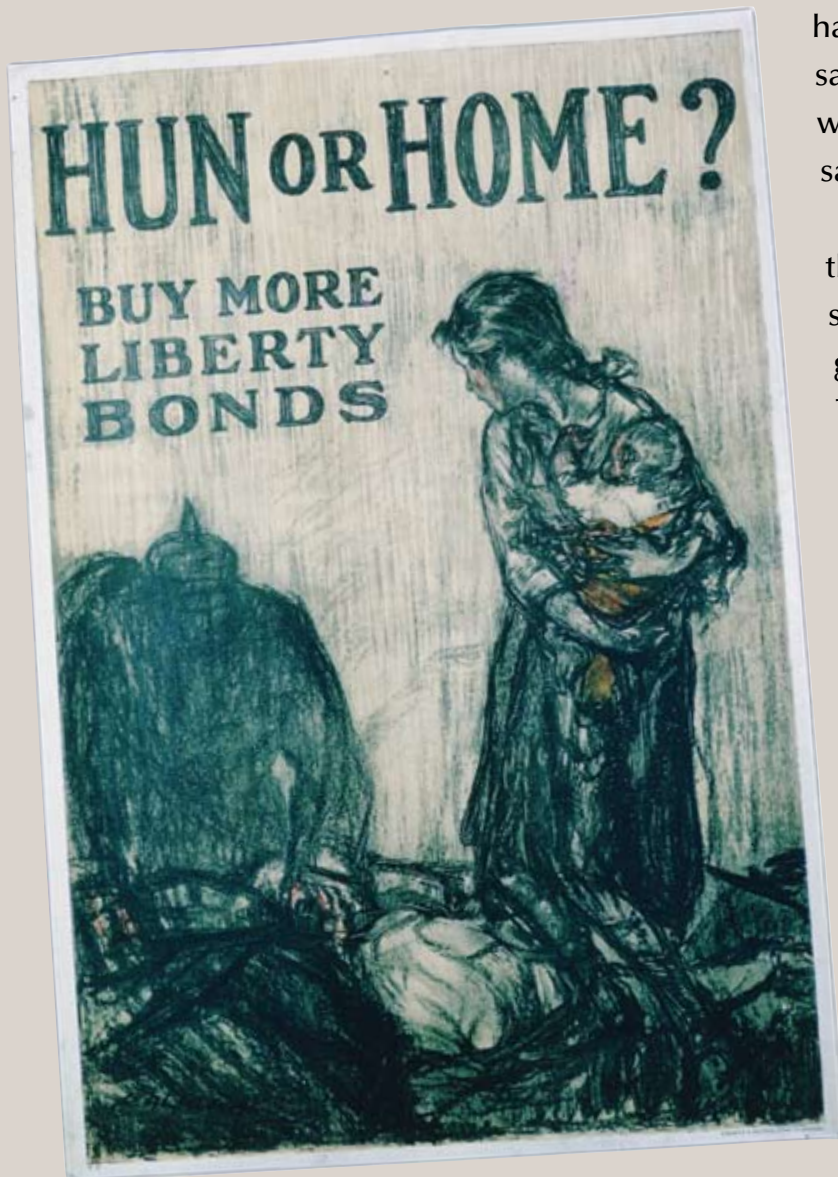


FIGURE 16.17: Once in the war, America joined Britain in depicting Germany as an evil “Hun.” Here the viewer is asked to decide the mother’s fate: “Hun or Home?” Will she be devoured by the lurking evil, or will she reach home and safety? The poster implies that you can save her if you do one thing: “Buy More Liberty Bonds.”

hard and not wasting food. Montanans saw posters like this every day during the war—in stores, post offices, smelters, sawmills, union halls, and train stations.

No matter which country produced them, war propaganda posters used the same elements: emotionally powerful graphic images and simple, direct text. They called upon basic emotions (fear, hatred, pity) to appeal to the largest possible audience. They used stereotyped images like noble soldiers, angelic women, vulnerable children, and monstrous enemies.

The text often used positive action words like *give*, *protect*, *join*, and *share*. They described allies as *angels* and *children*. But when describing the enemy, they used negative words like *demon*, *barbaric*, and *evil*.

Simple as they were, these propaganda posters were very effective. Some posters still communicate a powerful message even though their original purpose ended long ago.

In many ways, the propaganda posters of World War I also reflect the way many Americans think about themselves today.

Creating effective propaganda is a skill—and so is learning to analyze it. By analyzing propaganda, you can understand it more clearly without being manipulated by it. **Media literacy** (questioning and understanding the media you encounter) helps you be a more active, informed citizen.

# CHAPTER 16 REVIEW

## ► CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify: (a) Committee for Public Information; (b) Council of Defense; (c) Loyalty Committee; (d) Frank Little; (e) Montana Sedition Law; (f) Burton K. Wheeler
2. Define: (a) sedition; (b) pacifist; (c) propaganda; (d) liberty bonds; (e) inflation; (f) hoist cage; (g) bulkhead; (g) hyper-patriotism; (h) epidemic
3. How did the outbreak of World War I in Europe affect Montana industries?
4. Why was Jeannette Rankin watched so closely when Congress voted on the United States joining the war?
5. Describe what the state and federal governments did to get people to support the war.
6. Why did such a high percentage of Montanans go to war?
7. What were some of the reasons so many Indians enlisted?
8. Describe how the entry of the United States into the war affected Montana's industries.
9. In what ways did people support the war effort?
10. By encouraging people to support the war, how did the government eventually turn many people against one another?
11. What were the results of the Speculator Mine disaster?
12. How did the war affect the Metal Mine Workers' Union strike?
13. Why was Frank Little against the war?
14. How did the Council of Defense get power, and what actions did it take against the people of Montana?
15. How did the Montana Sedition Law relate to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution?
16. Who tried to speak out against hyper-patriotism?
17. Describe the effects of the influenza epidemic of 1918 on Montana and its people.
18. Describe some of the effects on Montana of the ending of World War I.

## ► CRITICAL THINKING

1. You read that Chief Plenty Coups encouraged young Crow men to enlist. Reread the quote on page 317. Using information from this chapter, and perhaps from Chapters 11 and 15, discuss some of the issues an Indian might have considered when deciding whether to enlist during World War I.
2. Analyze former congressman Thomas Stout's statement that "there can be but two classes of American citizens: patriots and traitors!" (page 319). Can someone oppose a war and still be a patriot? Explain your answer.

3. Why might prices for food and other consumer goods go up during the war? Why didn't wages rise at the same rate?

## ► PAST TO PRESENT

1. Think about the sacrifices people at home were asked to make during World War I. How does that compare to the sacrifices people made, or are making, during more recent wars (in Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan)?
2. Think about the influenza epidemic of 1918. Do you think the United States could face such a devastating illness in today's world of modern medicine? Do you think it is possible in other places in the world?
3. Do you think a law like the Montana Sedition Act could be passed again? Why or why not?

## ► MAKE IT LOCAL

1. A war memorial usually consists of a plaque or statue engraved with the names of those who died serving their country. Is there a war memorial in your town? Can you uncover any additional information about the soldiers honored?

## ► EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Research the reasons people were for and against the United States' entry into World War I. Read what President Wilson and others had to say and then divide the class into two groups and debate the pros and cons of joining the war.
2. Review the special section on propaganda at the end of the chapter. Analyze what makes the posters effective. Then find a cause or purpose and create a propaganda poster promoting your belief.
3. Research the 1918 influenza epidemic. Determine the difference between an epidemic and a pandemic and decide which term better describes this outbreak. How many people died in the United States? How many people died around the world? Where in the world were people most affected? Where did the epidemic/pandemic begin? Make charts or graphs to illustrate the information you discover.
4. Research some of the people convicted under the Montana Sedition Act. Based on what you discover, develop a realistic story about what might have happened to one of the prisoners after he or she was released from prison.



# Credits

The following abbreviations are used in the credits:

BBHC Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming  
GNPA Glacier National Park Archives  
LOC Library of Congress  
MAC Montana Arts Council, Helena  
MDEQ Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Helena  
MDT Montana Department of Transportation, Helena  
MFWP Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena  
MHS Montana Historical Society, Helena  
MHSA Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena  
MHSL Montana Historical Society Library, Helena  
MHS Mus. Montana Historical Society Museum, Helena  
MHS PA Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives, Helena  
MSU COT Montana State University College of Technology, Billings  
NMAI National Museum American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.  
MSU Billings Special Collections, Montana State University Billings Library  
NARA National Archives and Records Administration  
NPS National Park Service  
NRIS Natural Resource Information System, Montana State Library, Helena  
SHPO State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena  
TM Travel Montana, Helena  
UM Missoula Archives & Special Collections, The University of Montana-Missoula  
USDA United States Department of Agriculture  
USFS United States Forest Service  
WMM World Museum of Mining, Butte

## Chapter 16

- FIG. 16.1 Quilt, MHS Mus. X1982.71.01
- FIG. 16.2 *Enlist*, Fred Spear, courtesy The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri
- FIG. 16.3 Advertisement, *Liberty Girl*, MHS Mus. X1988.02.34
- FIG. 16.4 William Belzer in WWI aircraft, courtesy Dennis Gordon, Missoula
- FIG. 16.5 *Food Will Win the War*, courtesy The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri
- FIG. 16.6 Drill work, Butte mine, No. 1 A ore, ca. 1910, MHS PA Lot 8 Box 1/9.04
- FIG. 16.7 Hazel Odegard, 1919, MHS PA PAc 88-100 F2/5
- FIG. 16.8 War garden in Helena, 1918, MHS PA PAc 2005-4 A1 p10
- FIG. 16.9 Granite Mountain-Speculator Mine Fire, June 8, 1917, courtesy WMM
- FIG. 16.10 Machine gun crew, MT National Guard, Butte, Sept. 1, 1914, photo by King, MHS PA 958-184
- FIG. 16.11 German-Lutheran church in Marsh, 1914, MHS PA PAc 90-87.671
- FIG. 16.12 Prison photo of Martin Ferkovich, MHS PA PAc 85-91.6576
- FIG. 16.13 Book burning, courtesy Lewistown Public Library, MT

SIDEBAR, PAGE 326, U.S. Attorney Burton K. Wheeler, MHS PA Lot 4 Box 1/1.01

FIG. 16.14 Victory badge and ribbon, MHS Mus. X1959.02.01

FIG. 16.15 Drew Briner speaking at the pardon ceremony of Herman Bausch, photo by George Lane, *Helena Independent Record*, May 4, 2006

FIG. 16.16 World War I Red Cross poster, *Hand of Mercy*, courtesy LOC SD-50374

FIG. 16.17 *Hun or Home*, courtesy The National World War I Museum, Kansas City, Missouri