

2015

# Collections Created During Conflict: Preserving the Memory of the First World War

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COLLECTIONS CREATED DURING CONFLICT:  
PRESERVING THE MEMORY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by  
Rachel Gifford  
B.A., Utah Valley University, 2012  
May 2015

## **Acknowledgements**

The creation of this thesis has been supported by a variety of professors in the Department of History and the School of Library and Information Science at LSU. I am grateful for each of them. I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Elizabeth Dow for her encouragement and advice throughout my time at LSU. I would also like to thank Dr. Benjamin Martin for his consistent help in improving my writing. I would like to thank my committee for their time and efforts to complete this project. It would be remiss of me not to mention Stephanie Garis who has provided a constant support system during my educational career. This thesis would not have been possible without her.

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## **Abstract**

The Great War (1914–1919) forced society to decide whether cultural heritage institutions, as a whole, had value. An examination of the types of materials gathered during the Great War, the identity of the collectors, and the intended purpose the repositories highlights the shift in the methodological practices of libraries, archives, and museums during this period. This study focuses primarily on three Allied museums created during the conflict: The Imperial War Museum in England, the Bibliothèque-Musée de La Guerre in France, and the Liberty Memorial in the United States. These institutions emphasize how types of repositories were used as they instituted contemporary collecting practices to further education, to create community-based collections for increased public understanding, and to create a social memory about the Great War.

## Introduction

In 1919, the Council of the Royal Historical Society of England called for an update on the archives of the Allied Nations. Many of these governments had protected their collections by closing them at some point during the Great War, and the council was trying to record the conditions of these organizations for access by future students, researchers, and other professionals. At that time, the Society believed “that the value of the national histories of the War must largely depend upon [the archivists’] vigilance and judgement.”<sup>1</sup> This recognition of the Great War as a pivotal moment in world history, and the role of cultural heritage institutions in preserving that history, highlights the importance the professional community placed upon the repositories of the period. In the midst of the social upheaval and death of the war, individuals, communities, and governments created libraries, archives, and museums to memorialize and create a social memory of the event. In the process, the conflict also influenced the methodology and purpose of these fields.

Dr. Gaynor Kavanagh, well-known for her research in museums, memory, and the social history of World War I, noted that the Great War itself tested “the very purpose and worth of museums in society.”<sup>2</sup> These collections often included artifacts, books, manuscripts, and documents, and many of the institutions were initially created without the professional assistance from any of the related fields. Therefore, Kavanagh’s statement can be broadened to encompass libraries and archives as well museums. Society’s view of these institutions during the conflict would define their “purpose and worth” for decades to come.<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Foote, in his article titled “To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture,” stated that looking at specific situations or institutions can highlight “how social pressures shape landscape into an acceptable

representation of the past. The disposition of the tragedy sites mirrors society's views of its own motives and aspirations.”<sup>4</sup> This study reviews three prominent Entente museums created during the conflict: the Imperial War Museum in England, the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Bibliothèque-Musée de la Guerre in France. Although each institution was officially called a “museum,” all of these repositories also included pieces that could have been parsed out to libraries or archives. By understanding the institutions' founders, collections, and purposes, one can assess the value their respective societies placed on libraries, archives, and museums, and on the conflagration sweeping the world. To evaluate the Great War collections properly, one must first have a brief outline of the history of these institutions, as well as the influence the Great War had on them.

### **Public Libraries Archives, and Museums (LAMs): A Brief History**

Museums, libraries, and archives are not new conceptions, though early repositories did not have the formal titles ascribed by current society. Some historians, such as David Murray and Alma Wittlin, credit the Romans and Greeks with the current museological and library practices. Others, such as Antoine Schnapper, Jerónimo Arellano, and Klaus Kempf, focus on the creation and implementation of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cabinets of curiosity, or *Wunderkammern*, as the communal roots of the LAMs.<sup>5</sup> The library field traces its cataloging practices to the Sumerians, who invented writing and worked to organize the multitude of business records.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of their official origin, it is clear that churches, governments, and wealthy individuals have gathered manuscripts and artifacts deemed important or valuable by their given communities.

Since their inception, LAMs have been repositories that chronicled society's progress throughout history. During the medieval period, reliquaries could be found across Western Europe in the homes of bishops, knights, ladies, kings, or even the pope. These collections of relics were considered prized personal possessions, and were often transported with the owner as he or she travelled from place to place. A reliquary could house any number of items that represented religious devotion and personal interest, such as the "shift of the Virgin," ostrich eggs, illuminated manuscripts, or a variety of gifts gathered by travelers and brought to curry favor.<sup>6</sup> The community and the visitors to the area could be granted permission to view the pieces for a price. The repositories provided religious comfort, entertainment, and financial support for the collector as well as the local region.<sup>7</sup>

These medieval collections became the basis for the later cabinets of curiosity that were so popular in the early modern era. The accumulation of items during this period also began with private collectors or "gentleman scholars," some of whom were connected to the church or government.<sup>8</sup> The creator defined the purpose of these repositories according to his own personal interest and his ability to fund such a collection. The intended audience of these pieces was usually no larger than the immediate family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances of the cabinet's owner. Eventually, the items shifted away from religious themes, instead tending towards a variety of other artifacts, books, and manuscripts. Coins, scientific items, and ethnographic pieces representing the oddities of conquered societies appeared alongside the manuscripts, books, and art found in the previous era's reliquaries. One of the primary facets of these early repositories was the lack of distinction made by the collector regarding the types of pieces gathered. There were no defined standards of organization in these repositories. All of



these types of items appeared not only in the same cabinet but sometimes on the same shelf. The LAMs had yet to be separated from the single umbrella under which they had always existed; therefore, the pieces were collected and preserved in the cabinets of curiosity without regard to the nature of the paraphernalia. Also, professional librarians, archivists, or curators did not usually work with these repositories. Smaller collections were managed by the owners themselves. The larger ones, especially those housed by a church or governmental entity, were often overseen by “ecclesiastical scholars, lawyers, and merchants,” as was done with the Royal Library gathered by Jean-Baptiste Colbert for Louis XIV.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as organizational standards were established and purposes were defined, the LAMs became separate entities, or fields. The evolution of these fields in France is, perhaps, the most easily understood example of this dissociation. Historically, France’s Bibliothèque Nationale, the Sorbonne, and the Ecole des Chartes shaped the LAMs as well as the field of historical research in France. Today, current archival and library theories continue to trace their roots to the methods created at the Ecole des Chartes and the Bibliothèque Nationale, respectively, during the nineteenth century. Established by the government of Louis XVIII in 1821, the Ecole des Chartes is also responsible for the definitive split between the library and archival fields. By the end of the century, librarians were defined as those individuals who retrieved and re-shelved books at places such as the Bibliothèque Nationale, while archivists assisted the public in the search for historical documents. The use of the term “public” in this instance referred primarily to historians and researchers who travelled to the archives for a specific purpose. At this time, archives were defined as the “source of historical truth,” and the archivist acted as “the gatekeeper of that

truth.”<sup>10</sup> By 1906, the Ecole des Chartes was considered the only school for archival training and paleologists in Europe, and their archivists were considered the auxiliaries to French historians, trained in historical research and critique.<sup>11</sup>

France’s creation of public artistic and scientific museums also influenced the museological field. The Palace of the Louvre, still considered to be “the first great national art museum,” opened to public as the Musée Central des Arts de la République in 1793.<sup>12</sup> Just one year later, the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers opened. Today, this institution continues its long-standing tradition of housing and preserving scientific manuscripts, some of which date back to the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> The first French anthropological museum specifically focused on culture and ethnography, was the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, created in 1878. At that time, it was considered a branch of the French natural history museum, the Musée Nationale d’Histoire Naturelle, which began alongside other scientific museums in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> France also boasted two military museums, the Musée Historique de l’Armée and the Musée d’Artillerie, which merged together in 1905 to create the Musée de l’Armée, located at the Hôtel des Invalides.<sup>15</sup>

By the beginning of the Great War, museums held a firm place in French society. One would assume that with the creation of these influential museums, museological theory would have been as firmly established as the archival and library standardization of the era. Unfortunately, the vastly different types of materials housed at each of the museums thwarted any attempts to create a concrete, comprehensive museological theory. For example, as a branch of a scientific museum, the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro was structured according to scientific fields, focusing on scientific research and discovery.<sup>16</sup> Other museums aligned their practices according

to the fields of art or history, depending on the organization and preservation required by the items housed within their collections. These differences in the museums and the types of items they collect are still a source a topic of debate in the LAMs today.<sup>17</sup>

A museum's purpose or intent and its use by the public was, and continues to be, just as diverse. The Louvre, for example, was originally intended as a political statement that allowed the public access to priceless pieces of royal treasure in an effort to "serve the common man and woman of the new Republic."<sup>18</sup> The Conservatoire Nationale des Arts et Metiers and the Musée Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle were intended as depositories for scientific inventions and other items related to a variety of scientific fields. Although many of the scientific collectors were attached to universities and allowed their pieces to be accessed for academic research, these institutions were meant to house, not educate. Zoological, anthropological, and ethnographic museums, such as the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, were created during the nineteenth century to provide public access to the oddities or curiosities that existed around the world. These anthropological and ethnographic repositories still followed a scientific methodology even though they contained items of curiosity or interest for the public to view like art museums. These were not institutions of public education and research; they were exhibition storehouses. France's military museums provided the foundation of France's military memory and acted as a definition of historic events.<sup>19</sup> These collections espoused a political agenda. The purpose of the Musée de l'Armée was to perpetuate the preferred political interpretation of the French state's military history. Unfortunately, military museums were not pervasive in society at this time, though both France and Germany had created such institutions. The United Kingdom preserved armoury collections housing ancient weapons, but they did not provide an interpretation of

England's military history. The United States had not yet begun to establish the types of repositories prior to the Great War.

In fact, museums in the United States followed a different path than the ones found in Western Europe. As has been noted, large personal collections were created long before the public museums evolved in Europe. In the United States the opposite occurred. Public institutions appeared before the large private collections.<sup>20</sup> The European LAMs had already shifted to public institutions before the United States had the time or the resources to found its own institutions. The basis of the museological framework had already been established, though standardization was not yet complete, and the United States capitalized on the work of others in the field.

### Notes

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2. Gaynor Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (January, 1988): 77.
3. Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial, 77.
4. Kenneth Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture," *American Archivist* 53 (Summer, 1990): 391.
5. *Wunderkammern* translates to a chamber or small room of wonders or marvels. The term "Cabinets of Curiosity" was adopted by the English from the French usage of *cabinet*, according to Murray, though, there were a variety of other terms used in the early modern period to refer to these repositories. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the collection catalogs had begun to use three terms: cabinets of curiosity, *wunderkammern*, or museum. Antoine Schnapper, "The King of France as Collector in the Seventeenth Century," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (Summer, 1986): 185-202; Jerónimo Arellano, "From the Space of the Wunderkammer to Macondo's Wonder Rooms: The Collection of Marvels in Cien Años de Soledad," *Hispanic Review* (Summer 2010): 369-386; Klaus,

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6. Fred Lerner, *The Story of Libraries: From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009): 1-2.
7. Gunter Waibel and Ricky Erway, "Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Library, Archive, and Museum Collaboration," Webinar (Dublin, OH: OCLC Research, 2009).
8. David Murray, *Museums: Their History and their Use* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1904), 1:6; Alma S. Wittlin, *The Museum: Its History and Its Tasks in Education*, Karl Mannheim ed. (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Limited, 1949), 33.
9. Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 14; Murray, *Museums: Their History and their Use*, 19-27; Wittlin, *The Museum: Its History and Its Tasks in Education*, 56-66.
10. Lara Jennifer Moore, *Restoring Order: The Ecole des Chartes and the Organization of Archives and Libraries in France, 1820-1870* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, 2001), 222.
11. Moore, *Restoring Order*, 70, 237, 241.
12. Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd ed. (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 29.
13. Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 87-88.
14. Emmanuelle Sibeud, "La Bibliothèque du Musée de l'Homme: un Corpus Menacé," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 2, no. 3 (2000) doi 10.3917/rhsh.003.0185; Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 72.
15. Caroline Barcellini, "La Commémoration de la Grande Guerre au Musée de l'Armée," *Guerres Mondial et Conflits Contemporains* 4, no. 212 (2003) doi: 10.3917/gmcc.212.0003.
16. Sibeud, "La Bibliothèque du Musée de l'Homme."
17. Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 85-112; Sibeud, "La Bibliothèque du Musée de l'Homme."
18. Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 6-13.
19. Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 29.

20. Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial;" Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*; Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996).
21. Kenneth Hudson, *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought* (London: MacMillan Press, 1975), 31.

## **The Bibliothèque-Musée de La Guerre**

The Bibliothèque-Musée de La Guerre (Bibliothèque-Musée) is a prime example of museum creation at the turn of the century. Founded by wealthy industrialists, Louise and Henri Leblanc, the Bibliothèque-Musée began as a curious conglomeration of the LAMs, though it was created without any professional connection to the fields. At the onset of the war when patriotic fervor was high in France, the Leblancs gathered papers and artifacts to establish a social memory of France's involvement in the conflict. Later, the museum was transformed into a governmental institution to ensure the continuation of the collection and greater public access to the items it housed. Established by laymen, the organization defied current methodological practices by establishing contemporary collecting policies and focusing on the social history of the event rather than the scientific or technological.

### **The Leblancs**

Louise and Henri Leblanc were the founders, creators, and original archivists/librarians/curators of the Bibliothèque-Musée. Unfortunately, little is known about their lives. Prior to the Great War, they were noted philanthropists, but there is no specific mention of the Leblancs focusing their efforts on libraries, archives, or museums. It is generally understood that the desire to collect and preserve the history of the Great War originated with Louise at the beginning of the conflict. Henri obviously supported her efforts as his name was later used as editor of the official catalogue. According to her obituary, Louise was the daughter of a wealthy industrialist and was a widow when she married Henri Leblanc. The money inherited from her first husband and her father amounted to a substantial fortune.<sup>1</sup> Combined with both financial stability and the desire

to collect, her fortune allowed the couple to create what can be described as their own cabinet of curiosity that opened to the public as early as 1915.

Historians continue to debate the Leblancs' original intentions for the collection. There are two distinct theories. Some historians, such as Jean-Jacques Baker, suggest that the Leblancs began collecting items in 1914 out of a sense of patriotic pride. At the beginning of the war, the *Entente* believed the conflict would be short, and the public rallied to the phrase "Over by Christmas." Baker posits that the Leblancs believed they should collect items which could define France's participation in the conflict. These items would then be used to establish the glory of France within the minds of the public. The imagined brevity of the war was dispelled as the days, months, and finally, years of war passed, and the scale of the collection became more than the Leblancs could handle. According to Baker, it was at that point that the Leblancs turned to the French government for help preserving and housing the collection they had created.<sup>2</sup>

Other historians, such as Joseph Hüe, claim that the items amassed by the Leblancs were never intended as a personal repository, despite originally being housed within their home. This theory insists that the entirety of the collection was always intended for *l'Etat*, or the State, to provide an important museum and archive, or "Library museum," detailing the victory of France.<sup>3</sup> Hüe and others suggest that the Leblancs were working closely with the government to create an institution similar to France's Musée de l'Armée already in existence. These theorists believe that governmental representatives André Honnorat and Alexandre Varenne were working closely with the LeBlancs at the inception of the collection to construct an institution that would define the history of the French involvement in the current conflict, educate their people



according to the desired history, and foster a continued remembrance of France's glory and honor during the war.<sup>4</sup>

The debate over the LeBlancs' intended associations with the government continues due to a lack of primary sources that could provide the answer. The Leblancs never directly stated their intentions. Historians have only the short editor's notes included at the beginning of each collection catalogue and a preface found in the first catalogue published in 1916. The preface, written by Georges Carn, provided a second-hand description of the Leblancs' creation and intentions for the collection. As the collection catalogue was the LeBlancs' personal publication, one can assume they supported Carn's point of view. Carn's beliefs cannot be transposed, however, onto either of the Leblancs. It should also be noted that the Leblancs' personal thoughts, ideas, and goals are noticeably absent from the preface and that Carn's preface was not included in the second edition of the catalogue published less than a year later in 1917. In fact, an introduction does not appear in any of the later editions of the catalogue except for the sixth, which Camille Bloch published after the Leblancs had passed the collection to the French government.

The lack of primary sources regarding the Leblancs' intentions leaves historians without a firm understanding of the specific intentions for the future existence of their repository. Other than the short, ten-page introduction, the remainder of the 434-page first edition of the catalogue merely lists brief descriptions about each piece housed within the collection. Although these classifications emphasize the items considered valuable enough to collect, it does not shed any light on the Leblancs' original intentions for the collection as part of a governmental institution.

Carn's description of the formation of the Bibliothèque-Musée is filled with his personal narrative and his reasons for participating in the endeavor. He explained that in the early days of the conflict, the Leblancs recognized a need to collect items which could document the day-to-day story of the war. According to Carn, the exhibits were to include more than the usual museological fare. The Leblancs wanted to include the thoughts of artists and letter-writers, but also items that could be used to define the various aspects of a life lived during wartime. Carn also noted that in addition to the tragedies of war, the Leblancs' collection was filled with documents and artifacts that highlighted the curiosities and everyday lives of the soldiers. Carn briefly mentioned the efforts made by the Leblancs, along with Carn and his wife, to find an institution that was already gathering the types of items they felt were important for their interpretation of the war. There were none to be found. As has been mentioned previously, contemporary collecting was not a common museological practice. The Leblancs realized that they would have to create a repository to tell the story of the French soldier they had envisioned. The Leblancs hurried to acquire items they felt should be used by future historians and researchers. According to Carn, the intended purpose of the items was to clarify the causes of the war and France's part in the conflict and to praise the might of the French soldier and the glory of the country.<sup>5</sup> The museum would "render intelligible the causes, development, and consequences" of the war.<sup>6</sup> Using documents and artifacts, the LeBlancs' collection would then shape society's memory of the war in general and, more specifically, glorify the soldiers who had fought and died.

Regardless of the Leblancs' intentions, or lack thereof, to work with the government, Carn's introduction to the original catalogue contained multiple references to the glory of France, to

pride in the nation, and to other patriotic ideals. Carn believed that the collection was intended as a defense of the French involvement in the conflict and the implication of German guilt. Much like the Musée de l'Armée at the Hôtel des Invalides, the Bibliothèque-Musée was to define France's interpretation of its history of the current conflict. In contrast to the French military museum, however, Louise Leblanc did not intend for this collection to define only the French involvement. Louise's actions, discussed later in this text, underline her efforts to create an international collection.

Politicians also pushed for the creation of an institution such as the Bibliothèque-Musée. The parliamentary papers from August 1917 indicate that André Honnorat and Alexandre Varenne argued for the adoption of the Bibliothèque-Musée in an effort to create a special library to preserve the history of the war by collecting public and private documents relative to it. The library was also to have a two-fold mission: "scientific characteristics" as a "laboratory of history" to assist researchers, and defend the actions of France as something close to a "minister of collective opinion."<sup>7</sup> These politicians argued that creating such an institution was about more than providing information for historians, researchers, or the public. Although the dissemination of information was, and continues to be, a highly-valued goal within the fields of libraries, archives, and museums, Honnorat and Varenne prioritized French honor over public access to information. They warned that the failure to create this type of institution would

allow [France] to lose interest in the conservation for future generations of testimonies likely to shed light on the episodes and various aspects of the world revolution that started in 1914 and that appears to all as the crowning of the France of 1789.<sup>8</sup>

Such actions would be dishonorable. According to Honnorat, future societies must always be aware of the glory of France. The goals of the suggested national institution follow the original

ones of the Bibliothèque-Musée: to educate the public and to act as a laboratory for historians and researchers. It is apparent that Honnorat and Varenne agreed with Carn's stated purpose: the collection was intended to demonstrate the glory and honor of France. While such similarities could suggest an early alliance between the Leblancs and the French government, it is also possible that these two entities developed parallel to each other and only came together at this moment because they needed one another. Whether they began together or separately, it is clear that by 1917 the Leblancs, Honnorat, and Varenne were all working together towards the governmental adoption of the Bibliothèque-Musée.

### **Collection**

The continuing debate over the Leblancs' intentions does not hinder an analysis of their collection. With no formal archival, library, or museological training, the Leblancs collected items used during the war that they believed would have value to society as a whole. They worked tirelessly to collect as many items as possible from a variety of sources. After all of this time, it is unclear which specific item started the vast collection. Carn indicated that the collection started with French books and drawings regarding the war. An article published in *The London Times* on 20 February 1917 states that it began with “a copy of the French Mobilization Order, a few newspaper broadsheets, and some of the tiny patriotic emblems that were being sold to the war-fevered populace on the boulevards.”<sup>9</sup> The first catalogue included the writings of soldiers called *Ouvrages* and *Vignettes*, but an actual bibliography of French books did not appear until the second edition of the collection catalogue. If the Leblancs began the collection with French books, they quickly branched out from there. They also learned that amassing this type of vast collection would be a monumental task for multiple reasons.

One of the prime factors affecting the collecting practices was the length of the war itself. What the LeBlancs and others in French society believed would be a short war turned into a lengthy conflict. Instead of being over by Christmas 1914, the war dragged on. In 1916, when the LeBlancs published their first catalogue, the war was only about half over, and a large number of items were still regularly being added to the collection each month. In 1917, the repository was growing at the rate of twenty items a day.<sup>10</sup> Just as the length of the war increased the number of collected items, technology also had an impact. This war created innovative ideas that were implemented throughout the world. From the battlefield to the homefront, all aspects of society were working with new gadgets and designs that had never before been used in war. Propaganda reached a new level during the conflict using multiple forms of new media such as film. Soldiers were also using new types of weapons to fight and survive in the trenches. The Leblancs worked tirelessly to collect as much as they could, but these new inventions and technologies increased the number of artifacts to be collected.

Another dilemma was that the scope of the war was broader than that of any previous conflict. The number of countries and people involved in the Great War increased the number of collected items exponentially. Henri LeBlanc has been credited with the recognition that diversity should be included in the collection, both in the variety of materials as well as in the perspectives and opinions contained in the materials.<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that Louise Leblanc was, in fact, the person who traveled to the various places to gather documentation from as many countries as possible. It was Louise who went to Switzerland multiple times, with the permission of the French minister of war, of course, to enter neutral territory for the negotiation and procurement of German or pro-German items.<sup>12</sup> Louise also used her social connections among

artist and intellectual circles to collect testimonials from the French soldiers in the trenches known as the *poilus*.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Louise also worked with the renowned art critic René-Jean to acquire “enemy” drawings and paintings to “enrich the collection.”<sup>14</sup> Regardless of who received the credit, the first catalogue emphasized the desired diversity by including items from more than thirty countries, though it still retained a heavy French bias.

Public access to the collection was imperative for the Leblancs. If the purpose of their repository was to create a social memory by defining and justifying France’s part in the conflict while praising the might and glory of both the common French soldier and France, then society had to have access to the collection. The Leblancs allowed the public to view the items as early as 1915, long before they found a permanent location for the collection. As the Bibliothèque-Musée was housed at the Leblancs’ apartment for the first few years, people were invited into the Leblancs' home to view the collection “on Thursday afternoons and on the last Sunday in every month.”<sup>15</sup> British parliamentary member Ian Malcolm visited the Leblancs’ “two spacious first-floor *apartements*, containing some 15 rooms in all” in 1917 and published a report of the museum in *The London Times*.<sup>16</sup> In his article, Malcolm walked readers through the exhibits room-by-room, beginning with the library displaying some 6,000 books and brochures in a variety of languages. The visitors would then move into “the newspaper room” and through “a large salon whose walls are covered with the recruiting posters,” and finally into the small adjoining room “set apart for toys bearing on the war.”<sup>17</sup> Malcolm also mentioned tables and cabinets filled with items such as medals, flaglets and wax figurines dressed in the soldiers’s costumes. The final room visited by each patron of the museum was known as the “Chamber of

Horrors.” Here visitors were bombarded by the “portraits of the notorious Germans of the day, flanked by their brutal posters and with samples of their savagery arranged about the room.”<sup>18</sup>

In an effort to increase access and organization, the Leblancs published the collection’s first “Catalogue Raisonné” in 1916, as has been mentioned above. The 434-page catalogue included a list of the more than 25,000 items collected by the Leblancs in the first twenty-six months. They separated the catalogue into three main categories: *Documents Bibliographique*, *Documents Iconographiques*, and *Divers*. To clarify and to translate, these category titles refer, first to written texts, second to other written items considered related to or symbolic of the conflict, and finally to others, or any item not considered a document. Each category included a variety of sub-categories identifying every type of item housed in the collection. The number of items in a sub-category ranged from the smallest at two pieces (*Divers*: Painted Boxes) to the largest at 5,188 pieces (*Documents Bibliographique*: *Ouvrages*).<sup>19</sup>

Of the thirty-four sub-categories, the majority of collected items were primarily classed as *Documents Iconographiques*: Prints (4,632 pieces), *Documents Iconographiques*: Postcards (4,012 pieces), and, the previously mentioned, *Documents Bibliographique*: *Ouvrages* (5,188 pieces). A direct translation of the term “*ouvrages*” would be “works” or “articles.” This final sub-category referred to items written by soldiers, politicians, or civilians, which relate to the war in some way. This category does not include cards or letters, as the Leblancs classed these items in multiple sub-categories under *Documents Iconographiques*. At just under 14,000 pieces, these first three categories composed about one-half of the collection.

Print images were constantly circulated both in the trenches and on the home front as propaganda efforts often used these forms of media to perpetuate the ideals of the *Union Sacrée*,

which united all Frenchmen to the cause of the nation regardless of religious, political, or personal opinion. Public notices, poster notifications, and books continue to be among the most represented pieces in every current World War I collection.<sup>20</sup> A prime example of these items were the *Images d'Épinal*, a poster-type art form dating back to the sixteenth century and revived at the beginning of the Great War. These prints had both religious and patriotic sentiment woven into an image. "Their aim was to bring home to the civilian population at war the enduring features of eternal France."<sup>21</sup> The civilian population responded enthusiastically, based on the sales records of these posters. One of the more popular themes found throughout the *Images d'Épinal* was the variety of images used to recreate the beginning of the war as a heroic myth. These prints included images of men going to battle with both patriotic zeal and religious faith as their guide.<sup>22</sup>

Postcards also saw widespread distribution throughout France. Hans-Christian Pust calculated that postcards made up more than 20 percent of the 28,000,000 pieces of mail delivered during the war.<sup>23</sup> According to noted French historian Annette Becker, thousands of these postcards are currently housed at the Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne alone.<sup>24</sup> Other museums, both in France and globally, continue to include postcards sent to family and friends from soldiers fighting in the trenches on the Western Front. The images found on the postcards included a variety of scenes. Some postcards had battle images with ruined buildings or farmland, while others had funny cartoons or sincere drawings.

Finally, the *Ouvrages* would also have been readily accessible as they were published in a variety of places. The daily news sheets throughout France included these types of writings. Other writings such as poetry or personal articles could be collected from the authors themselves.



The topics ran the gamut of possibilities. Politics, religion, military strategy, and even the daily drudgery of soldiering were all included in these writings. Public access to these types of prints, postcards, and *ouvrages* would have been extremely easy during the first few years of the war. Thus, their appearance in large quantities is not surprising. Later, the Leblancs strived for a more balanced collection, and subsequent catalogues indicate that the collection of other items took precedence.

The next three largest sub-categories included were the *Documents Iconographiques: Photographs* (2,493 pieces), *Documents Iconographiques: Drawings from Journals* (1,908 pieces), and *Documents Iconographiques: Vignettes* (1,353 pieces). These items are much more personal than the first three categories. Journals were, specifically, items usually carried personally by the soldiers and would not have been shared lightly. Photographs played a role similar to the prints and postcards mentioned above, however, and could have been passed from a soldier to his family members or friends. The *Vignettes* may also have been intended for public consumption. These items were created by various soldiers, both officers and enlisted army. It is possible that some of the items gathered by the Leblancs' were originally printed in the trench newspapers. The large number of these items support the theory that Louise Leblanc's connections provided direct access to the soldiers on the front lines and included the collection of trench newspapers and other materials circulating in the trenches.

By calculating the number of identified items in these top six subcategories (over 19,000 pieces), it becomes clear that these items were the easiest for the Leblancs to obtain. They composed over three-quarters of the items reported in the 1916 catalogue, even though they represent less than one-quarter of the types of collected materials.<sup>25</sup> The remaining pieces of the

original collection were scattered among twenty-eight other sub-categories, such as Music, Carpets, Maps, Medallions, Currency, and Letters. Some of these items such as the medallions and letters were of a highly personal nature. Soldiers would have carried these items while they were on the front lines or sent them to friends and family members on the home front. Religious medallions especially were carried by soldiers into battle as a representation of the soldier's faith. They were worn for intercession, protection, or even just for luck. The soldiers would not have parted with these pieces or given them to the Leblancs before the war was finished.<sup>26</sup> The medals of honor awarded for bravery and courage found in the collection are also immensely personal. Only upon the soldier's death would the medal have been sent to the soldier's family. These items were also used as personal memorials for the soldier's family, and obtaining them would not have been easy for the Leblancs. It is extremely probable, therefore, that the Leblancs worked closely with the families of deceased soldiers to add these items to the collection. Despite the domination of the top six categories within the early collection due to the ease of those item's retrieval, it is apparent that the Leblancs were persistent in gathering the more personal pieces and thus providing a more complex and diverse representation of the soldiers who fought. They were earnest in their desire to document the history of the war and the glory of the French soldiers through a variety of artifacts and documents.<sup>27</sup>

This need to record the diversity of the conflict also led Louise Leblanc to travel. She gathered items from as many countries as she could gain access to, including some of the countries that stood on the opposite side of the Frenchman's battlefield. As mentioned above, the first catalogue identified items that were gathered from more than thirty countries. The collection contained items from all of the major combatants and some of the countries considered neutral at

the time of the catalogue's publication. The Leblancs listed some of the French colonies, such as Algeria and Tunisia, as "countries," while others were listed as "colonies." British colonies were also grouped together under the heading "British Colonies." Therefore, though these places may be considered individual countries today, it might be more appropriate to state that the catalogue listed collected items from citizens and soldiers representing at least thirty distinct locations around the globe.

The growth rate of the collection in the first two years illustrated how unprepared the Leblancs were as they began this undertaking. They had not anticipated the vast number of artifacts that would be created by this conflict. In spite of their lack of museological or archival training, they continued to collect any item connected to the war with an appraisal policy that centered on their vague understanding of an item's possible value. They also began looking for ways to mitigate the multitude of problems that accompanied the creation of a library, a museum, or an archive. One of the first steps the Leblancs took was to find help to complete the overwhelming task of organizing their repository. In this vein, the Leblancs hired a group of archivists and secretaries to "archive, identify, sort, [and] classify" the collection, as well as to assist in the creation of the future collection catalogues, of which the museum published six between 1917 and 1922.<sup>28</sup> These individuals provided immediate support and relief to the Leblancs, evidenced by the release of a second "Catalogue Raisonné" in 1917, seven short months after the first catalogue was released. The number of items in the second edition of the catalogue was more than double the original number. It reached a total of 58,061 pieces by April 30, 1917.<sup>29</sup> As mentioned above, the *Divers* category grew at a rapid pace and showed the largest increase between the two editions. The first catalogue reported only 179 items separated into six

sub-categories under the *Divers* category. By the second catalogue, the same category totaled more than 8,000 items arranged into fourteen sub-categories. This vast increase in a single category highlights both the Leblancs' commitment to including the soldier's more personal items to provide a more balanced and complete collection as well as the increased ability to catalogue and record items with the help of the trained archivists and secretaries.

It is also of note that the hiring of archivists and secretaries was the Leblancs' first attempt to incorporate professionals into the museum's structure. The collecting practices did not seem to change immediately, but the second edition of the catalogue, which was created with the assistance of the new employees, followed the general theories of archival organization. The addition of a bibliography and the general item descriptions shifted to integrate the archival field's practices with the existing documentation. Over time, these catalogues would continue this slow shift towards archival practice until the sixth edition, when Camille Bloch completed the shift in one abrupt move.

### **Location**

As the collection grew more organized due to the extra help, the Leblancs turned their attention to the problems of location. Initially, housing was a secondary issue. The Leblancs worked by themselves and kept the collection in their apartment in Paris. As the collection grew exponentially, the lack of space in their home combined with the number of people required to care for the collection and the number of visitors each month became problematic. There were too many people and too many items to be accommodated in the Leblancs' two spacious apartments. The Leblancs began looking for another place to house the museum.

It is unknown at what point in the collecting process the Leblancs first began working with the government to solve their location issue. As mentioned above, the early connection between Honnorat, Varenne, and the Leblancs is unclear. What is known is that shortly after the release of the second catalogue in 1917, Honnorat, and Varenne introduced their proposal for the adoption of the Leblancs' collection and the official creation of the Bibliothèque-Musée as a national institution. In July 1917, Honnorat made his impassioned plea for the creation of a special library to document the war and to educate all French citizens on the honor of France during the conflict. In August, a vote was taken to create the Bibliothèque-Musée as a state institution, under the authority of the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts.<sup>30</sup> In September, a Council of Administration, or board, was created. Unsurprisingly, Honnorat was established as the deputy, or chair, of the twenty-member council. The Leblancs also continued working with the newly established governmental institution as members of the council with the title Director of Higher Education, which was apparently shared between the two of them.<sup>31</sup> A few months later, the Senate formally accepted the donation of the Leblancs' collection in January 1918.<sup>32</sup> The Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts and the Council of Administrators oversaw the new organization; however, the collection was shifted to the care of the First Inspector General of the Archives and Libraries, Sorbonne professor Camille Bloch, in 1918. Bloch was firmly entrenched in the archival field and had helped to establish contemporary archival practices. Often, the classically-trained archivists who accepted roles as the administrators of the French national libraries, archives, and museums of this era, were trained at, or interacted regularly with, the Ecole des Chartes. Bloch had received his training from both the Sorbonne and the Ecole des Chartes. He was also a member of the professional association for French archivists

(*Association des Archivistes Français*) created in 1905, and later the president of the association's High Commission on the Archives.<sup>33</sup> With the transfer of the LeBlancs' museum to Bloch in 1918, the amassed items were solidified as an archival repository to be handled according to that field's practices and standards. Regardless of the chosen archival cataloging standards, the collection itself was still more closely related to the eighteenth-century cabinets of curiosity as it tried to "unite the world's information under one roof" for a specific society and purpose with a complete disregard for the types of pieces it housed.<sup>34</sup> France's the Bibliothèque-Musée, thanks to the LeBlancs' early efforts, included archival manuscripts, library books, and museological artifacts all connected in some fashion to the Great War.

While Bloch was working to shift the institutional practices regarding the collection, the government was coming to terms with the immediate needs of the museum. At the adoption of the Leblancs' collection in 1918, there was still no firm plan for a permanent museum location. The solution did not fully materialize for another four years, and came in the form of the Château de Vincennes. As the Leblancs and others searched for a home for the still growing the Bibliothèque-Musée collection, the Society of the Friends of Vincennes searched for a cultural institution that could be housed in conjunction with their dungeon and military exhibits at the Château de Vincennes. The Friends of Vincennes had worked for decades to preserve the castle and its collection, but in order to receive government funding and to ensure the preservation of the dungeon, the Friends of Vincennes needed an institution that could be housed at the castle and would be willing to share the space with the collection already in place.<sup>35</sup> In 1918, as the new governmental institution hunted for proper accommodations, the idea of moving to the Château de Vincennes was broached but not well received. The Leblancs, Honnorat, and Bloch

did not support the idea of moving the collection to the castle's Queen's Pavilion in the remote location of the Château de Vincennes. They felt that the old military fort and dungeon would not provide the proper atmosphere for the Bibliothèque-Musée's contemporary collection. The Friends of Vincennes were not discouraged. Instead they determined to woo the Bibliothèque-Musée's administrative council and the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. Over the course of two years, the Friends of Vincennes worked to convince everyone that all parties would benefit from an alliance between the Bibliothèque-Musée and the Friends of Vincennes. They even persuaded President Raymond Poincaré to visit the castle alongside the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts and a number of other military and political representatives in October 1919 to demonstrate how advantageous the institution would be to the local communities. The perseverance of the Friends of Vincennes met with success, and the official dedication took place November 27, 1920, more than three years after Honnorat's proposal for the creation of a museum had reached the government. Bloch immediately moved to the Queen's Pavilion at the Château de Vincennes and began his work, though the installation of the Leblancs' collection was not complete for another four years.<sup>36</sup>

In 1925, La Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (BDIC) was annexed to the the Bibliothèque-Musée. The BDIC was a library comprising documents about the history of international war cooperation and, by 1925, focused specifically on the Great War. Like the Bibliothèque-Musée, the BDIC was to be a "laboratory of history," with the intentions of gathering documents from both private and governmental institutions in an effort to educate the public.<sup>37</sup> By 1934 the Bibliothèque-Musée had merged with the BDIC and taken La Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine as the official name of the

combined institution.<sup>38</sup> Bloch also relinquished control of the institution to the University of Paris that same year to ensure the financial survival of the collection he had preserved for over fifteen years.<sup>39</sup>

Once installed, the Leblancs' collection remained primarily housed at the Château de Vincennes until the 1970s. In August 1944, World War II intruded on the quiet world of the Château de Vincennes. A fire destroyed the Queen's Pavilion and part of the BDIC collection. The remaining pieces were removed and housed in a safer location until the end of the war. It returned home to the Queen's Pavilion once the repairs to the buildings were completed in 1950. In 1970, the collection was split between its library and museum components. The library portion was moved at that time to the new University of Paris in Nanterre. The museum section was later moved to the Hôtel des Invalides in 1973.<sup>40</sup>

The Leblancs' original hopes of providing a collection that would justify France's part in the Great War and praise the might and glory of France were lost in the interwar despair that consumed much of Europe. The interwar years and World War II required the Bibliothèque-Musée to shift its goals as most of European society no longer believed in the original reasons behind the Great War and began to question the loss of so many lives. With the merging of the BDIC, the original rationale of the Bibliothèque-Musée was lost entirely. World War II quickly became the new priority for the French people, and, in reality, the world. The BDIC, an institution focused on the history of international war cooperation, began collecting items for the new international conflict. Since that time, the BDIC collection has expanded to include items from each international conflict throughout Europe. While the institution might continue to



house the original museum collection, what was representative of the French ideals at the commencement of the Great War succumbed to the changing social beliefs.

### Notes

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## **The Imperial War Museum**

In direct contrast to the Bibliothèque-Musée, the Imperial War Museum (IWM) began as a governmental idea. The men involved in the founding of the institution were not citizens taking initiative but administrative personnel with the desire to expand their personal visions. The museum's sometimes frustrating connection to the government had both positive and negative effects on the creation of the museum and its collection. The collecting practices, and the educational and memorial components of the proposed institution also diverge from the era's museological practices as will be shown in this chapter.

### **Creating a War Museum**

In early March 1916, the British government decided to close the national museums, archives, and galleries “as a political gesture, a public example of economy in wartime.”<sup>1</sup> A variety of these types of institutions had closed their doors already in the years immediately following the start of the war due to a lack of both the funds and the men needed to continue daily operations. Although the necessary preservation practices for all artifacts and manuscripts would continue when possible, the English people could no longer access the collections. Parliament's Retrenchment Committee believed that the already limited hours of the national institutions and the loss of tourists due to the war created a significant decrease in the number of visitors to the museum and therefore approved the closure of the national museums to save money. A few museums, such as the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and various science museums, were kept open for research purposes or to provide a location for the special exhibits used to bolster the country's patriotism or to educate the public on crucial matters such as health and hygiene or food economy. The remaining institutions were closed for the duration of the war.

The public did not approve of Parliament's actions and protested this move by signing petitions, writing letters, and publishing articles and cartoons in British journals and newspapers.

Unfortunately, the government felt that society in its current state of war could not afford the overall cost of its museums, and the institutions remained closed.

It is a bit of a conundrum, therefore, that one grueling, battle-heavy year later on March 5, 1917, the War Cabinet approved the establishment of "a national war museum to record the events still taking place" on the continent.<sup>2</sup> This drastic shift in parliamentary policy can be attributed to the determination of a few men who believed that the current events of the war were worth remembering and who persistently worked toward the creation of the museum. The formation of a national institution regarding both contemporary and military events was unprecedented in the United Kingdom. The empire had not yet adopted the view that current social and cultural history should be preserved. Folk museums were popular in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, but many countries, including the United Kingdom, had yet to follow their example. Also, unlike France and Germany, the United Kingdom did not have museums dedicated to the military. Regimental museums did exist, but they were rare and provided little or no public access to their collections. These museums were dedicated to military achievements from centuries before and available to military personnel only. What today's society considers a war museum did not actually exist anywhere in the United Kingdom prior to the Great War. Therefore, the proposal placed before the War Cabinet in 1917 by the First Commissioner of Works, Sir Alfred Mond, was ground-breaking.

The idea for a national museum began months before Mond was even involved. The topic was broached and repeatedly postponed during private conversations until members of

government felt that the creation of a national war museum might be approved. The government was occupied with the more pressing matters of the war, and a museum was only a vague possibility. The museum closures of the previous year highlighted the uncertainty of the War Cabinet's approval. The recent placement of Mond as First Commissioner of Works and his friend David Lloyd George as the newly appointed Prime Minister encouraged many that the museum endeavor could find governmental favor. The Curator of the Tower Armouries, Charles ffoulkes, began approaching current and former members of Parliament, with the idea of collecting specific military items for the Tower's collection in February 1917.<sup>3</sup> Ffoulkes found a sympathetic audience in men such as Viscount Lewis Vernon Harcourt, the former First Commissioner of Works, and one of many who had already begun collecting war relics with the goal of creating a museum after the conflict.<sup>4</sup> Harcourt pushed ffoulkes to engage the public by using the press, which ffoulkes did with the publication of an article on February 21, 1917.<sup>5</sup> Before ffoulkes' article could be published, two other articles appeared in *The Times* to bolster ffoulkes' goals and indicated that citizens were at least thinking about the collections that should be created during the Great War.

The first, titled "A War Bibliography," by an unknown author, appeared February 15, 1917. The author explained that the Central Committee for the National Patriotic Organizations had begun compiling a "complete bibliography of everything published in relation to the war."<sup>6</sup> Five days later *The Times* published Ian Malcolm's words extolling the virtues of the Leblancs' collection. While he described the Leblancs' collection and the available exhibits, the key component of Malcolm's article for ffoulkes was Malcolm's public call to action. "Our Government . . . is too much occupied with graver matters to divert its attention to the formation

of a museum of this kind,” he stated, “but, as in France, there are others who might do it, and could do it.”<sup>7</sup> Malcolm was pushing for a community-created institution such as the Bibliothèque-Musée or the soon-to-be-established Liberty Memorial, but that was not the goal of those working in the government. The day following Malcolm’s article, the *Times* published ffoulkes’ words about creating a national collection. Ffoulkes pushed for a more militaristic collection, with less emphasis on the social or cultural consequences of the conflict. He wanted the collection to be added to the Tower Armouries and to come under his jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup>

Working, not quite comfortably, together, Mond and ffoulkes created the proposal to be presented to the War Cabinet. The proposal pushed for the identification of items of historical or military importance and marking them for preservation in the new museum.<sup>9</sup> The prime minister supported the effort, and the War Cabinet created the museum with a full board. The originally titled National War Museum was placed under the jurisdiction of Mond’s Office of Works, with Sir Martin Conway as Director General and ffoulkes as Secretary.<sup>10</sup> Although an unlikely trio, these men established a solid working relationship. Ffoulkes later described the team as “the Government Chief, a Swiss of Jewish extraction, the Director, an art expert and mountaineer, and the Curator, one who was supposed to be only interested in mediaeval armour . . . that started and produced . . . very satisfactory results.”<sup>11</sup> A War Committee reporting to Conway was also established to handle the organization and exhibition of the new museum’s proposed collection. In this way the IWM was vastly different from the Bibliothèque-Musée. Not only was the government involved at the inception of the IWM, but both Conway and ffoulkes were trained in museological theory. Ffoulkes was a curator with years of experience in the field. Conway’s art expertise was responsible for the large number of artistic pieces that were added to the collection.

The IWM's committees and reporting structure were also a unique creation that ensured the project would not overwhelm any one individual or committee.

The initial public response to the institution's creation was minimal. British society in 1917 was more concerned with winning the war and dealing with the influenza pandemic that had begun to spread. Yet, local newspapers did include responses to the formation of a National War Museum. These responses revolved around three topics: Mond's efforts to define the museum's purpose, the desire of other Imperial nations for their own individual, national museums, and a variety of comments regarding the museum's exhibits, including the requests for materials, the donation of materials, and the currently displayed traveling exhibitions from Conway's committees.

### **Purpose**

The most common references to the museum from various newspapers reported on Mond's activities in his position as the First Commissioner of Works. Mond was frequently called upon to speak publicly, and he often included a short commentary regarding the purpose of the new museum. Each of these speeches was reported in the newspapers throughout the empire. Mond's early words focused on the purpose of the institution. From May to July 1917, Mond repeated the same objective of the museum: "to gather together all the important records of the war," and "the preservation of records and objects of interest connected to the war."<sup>12</sup> In August 1917, Mond expanded his stated purpose when he traveled to France to designate a location to house any objects collected for the new museum. In interviews, Mond clarified his desired objective as one that looked forward to what the world would say about the current conflict in the years to come. He believed that the collection would "provide the future historian with ready material" to study



the contemporary events.<sup>13</sup> Yet, for Mond, ffoulkes, and Conway and his Committee, this museum was to have a contemporary effect as well. These individuals believed that the museum was also a memorial for the men who had served. Mond stated,

The men who have taken part in this great war will come there to revive memories of the terrible past and to explain to those who never beheld it, and to the younger generations all the horror and heroism of this Armageddon that the madness of German militarism brought upon the world.<sup>14</sup>

From that point, Mond worked to transform the public perception of the new museum into an institution of patriotic education and memorial. It was to be a place for the thousands of returning soldiers to reference when trying to explain the reality of war to the people who had only experienced the homefront version of it. The exhibits would also honor the soldiers' sacrifices and place them in a position of distinction. These roles were similar to the purpose hoped for by the French government's adoption of the Bibliothèque-Musée. The collections would point out the just actions of the Allies and the horror of both German military actions and German society as a whole. This belief quickly took hold throughout the founders and the various committees.

Dr. Sue Malvern posits that the very idea of a war museum during this era was contradictory to the purpose of museums. Museums worked to house the treasures associated with the "monuments of cultural achievement," which could include items brought back from previous conflicts throughout the empire as a sign of Imperial prowess.<sup>15</sup> By 1917, relatively few members of society considered the IWM's proposed collections dedicated to war, death, and destruction as a monument to any sort of achievement, let alone to one of cultural significance. Contemporary museological theory, therefore, forced the founders of the IWM to create an

alternate role within the community for an institution that “celebrate[d] the uncelebrateable.”<sup>16</sup>

Mond’s efforts focused on the education of the public and the memorialization of the event.

During the conflict, various museums sponsored a variety of traveling exhibits on health and hygiene and food economy. These exhibits were extremely popular in England and had paved the way for the IWM’s new purpose. Unfortunately after the war, it was determined that education belonged to the academic field. The curators were no longer to create exhibits with the intention of teaching the public about specific topics. Museums, once again, became institutions to exhibit technologies and interesting ethnographic tidbits. Yet, the IWM could continue to teach the folly of international world wars and discourage the English people from engaging in any other conflict, for the Great War was touted as the “War to End All Wars.” Mond stated that this museum would train future generations “to shrink from having recourse to arms whether from ambition of conquest or for the settlement of differences between the Nations of the world.”<sup>17</sup> This theme was upheld by various museum representatives from 1917 to 1920. King George V reiterated this purpose in his opening ceremony. He stated, “We hope and pray that, realising all we have done and suffered, they will look back upon war, its instruments, and its organizations, as belonging to a dead past.”<sup>18</sup> While it was an admirable effort, these educational goals were not achievable, even with the avid public attendance the museum experienced in the first years of its creation. By the 1930s, the looming Second World War only highlighted the realization that the United Kingdom alone could not eradicate the idea of war when dealing with the larger global community. Like the French, English society began to question the achievements of the Great War in general and, specifically, the loss of so many lives.

The memorial purpose, though intrinsically entwined with the educational purpose, was not as accepted by the Empire. During the building planning stages, Conway and his committee created a central theme for the new institution revolving around the museum as a memorial. Conway believed that “a War Museum that did not record and honour the brave who sacrificed their lives for their country would be constructed on a fundamentally wrong principle.”<sup>19</sup> Mond agreed with Conway, and in August 1917 a proposal was sent to the War Cabinet which included the “adoption of the National War Museum as the National War Memorial.”<sup>20</sup> The War Cabinet was not inclined to agree with Mond and Conway. Some members wanted to reverse the decision of the previous March, vehemently denying the need for a museum dedicated to a war that was “not yet won and which it was quite conceivable in the future [the country] might desire as far as possible to forget.”<sup>21</sup> Others believed that the collections would become a “white elephant” of interest to no one.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of the feelings in the War Cabinet, Mond, ffoulkes, and Conway and his committee worked diligently to enhance the memorial aspect of the museum.

Another unstated purpose of the museum which cannot be dismissed was the bolstering of public opinion of the war. Authors have suggested that the museum itself was created out of a need to renew society’s patriotic sentiment. War weariness continued to diminish support for the war effort. Kavanagh argues that one of the prominent purposes of the museum could have been “‘opinion-forming,’ otherwise known as propaganda.”<sup>23</sup> Recognizing that the claim cannot be fully substantiated, Kavanaugh notes that the creation of the IWM coincided with the creation of two separate departments intended to boost public morale and increase public support of the war: the Department of Information and the National War Aims Committee.<sup>24</sup> Stephen Badsey also notes that the “organisers of the official propaganda had worked in close collaboration with the

Imperial War Museum,” starting in 1917.<sup>25</sup> As the war in Europe grew increasingly desperate, the British needed to increase support for the war, and the IWM could be used as an avenue to influence public opinion in a positive manner. The politicians in Parliament and the War Cabinet who acted upon Mond’s original proposal could have been less altruistically inclined than Mond, ffoulkes, and Conway. The museum’s traveling exhibits on women’s war work and the daily lives of soldiers, created and sponsored by the IWM beginning in 1918, yielded favorable results in this area. The public’s positive response to the IWM’s exhibits and the museum’s numerous visitors upon opening, therefore, could be viewed as justification for using the museum as “a means of promoting the war and strengthening the war mood.”<sup>26</sup>

A primary concern of subjects of the Imperial crown not located in London revolved around the overall subject of the museum. Citizens of the empire located outside of England felt that the national museum did not necessarily include the other nations of the Empire, and, therefore, that individual national museums should be created as well. The most vocal proponent of this idea, Colonel John Stewart-Murray, Eighth Duke of Atholl, wrote a letter to the editor that appeared in multiple newspapers throughout England and Scotland. Atholl pushed for a collection to be created to highlight Scotland’s significant role in the war. Atholl had served in the Dardanelles and rightly believed that Scottish regiments deserved to be honored equally with English regiments. He suggested the creation of a Scottish National War Museum, to be housed in Edinburgh and filled with “war relics” to be obtained from among the items collected by the Mond’s Office of Works.<sup>27</sup>

Many of those involved with the IWM did not agree with Atholl or with any of the numerous others who supported the desire for more localized war museums. Yet, in an effort to be more

inclusive, the national museum in London was renamed the Imperial War Museum in January 1918. The new title did not change the collecting practices of the IWM, and the institution's focus remained on the British contribution to the war. Other countries continued to gather items as well, and national war museums were founded in Canada, Australia, and Scotland. None of these institutions have ever been directly connected to the IWM.

Mond did try to support smaller, regional collections in England through the Local War Museums Association (LWMA), which was created in May 1917. This new coalition would work with the more modest municipal museums to create specialized repositories for the communities involved. According to Mond, the IWM would focus on the "broader outlines" of the conflict while trying to house as complete a collection as possible.<sup>28</sup> The smaller institutions would create exhibits emphasizing "examples of all kinds of work done in the locality for war purposes and a full list of those who had gone forth to fight" from the community.<sup>29</sup> These museums would also honor the specific regimental or local organizations which participated in the war effort and include what Mond referred to as a "Hall of Memory" dedicated to the men who had fought and died from each area.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, even these organizations would include the new educational and memorial aspects espoused by the IWM.

Many local museums originally wished to be involved in the LWMA, but the large association was hampered by its size and the limited time of those coordinating its efforts. As the war continued, the individuals tasked with organizing the LWMA were occupied with the more pressing details of the winning the war. Museum collections were considered a lower priority. Then, as the war drew to a close, the creation of local war museums or exhibits lost popularity among the smaller communities. The cost to collect and house such repositories was no longer

supported by the citizens, and local museums no longer wished to “memorialize the war through its own destructive hardware.”<sup>31</sup> The war relics and trophies that the LWMA had planned to acquire from the IWM never appeared, leaving the regional institutions with little to exhibit. A few local collections were created. These exhibits were not sustainable and were quickly absorbed into other collections.

### **Collection**

Governmental institutions look at the national picture from a much broader perspective, and the IWM was, and continues to be, an institution created for and funded by its government. Thus, it is an institution instigated by the government for the government and the desire to provide a specific national perspective is clearly seen in the museum’s efforts to “collect and display the material as a record of everyone’s experience during that war — civilian and military — and to commemorate the sacrifices of all sections of society.”<sup>32</sup> Upon approval in 1917, the IWM began gathering items immediately, though there was no defined collecting policy regarding the types of material the museum was to house. The War Committee, under the direction of Conway, created their own guidelines according to each sub-committee’s specific collecting needs, and the originally-proposed museum became a national war reference library, a national war museum, a national war art gallery, and a national war archive, all at once.<sup>33</sup> The overwhelming nature of such an enterprise is obvious. To create a collection that housed everything connected to the war was a major undertaking, as the Leblancs in France had learned. Yet, the War Committee worked diligently to achieve the impossible until the War Cabinet forced housing and space limitations on the museum’s proposed exhibits, and the War Committee realized their need for a more restrictive appraisal policy.

The first step in the creation of the collection was to assign a Canadian officer in France, Major Henry Beckles Wilson, the ambiguous role of field collector. Wilson was given one task. He was to earmark and house items from France and Belgium that the IWM would display in their museum after the current war was won. Wilson's task was made difficult by the unclear nature of his instructions. Mond, Conway, and ffoulkes provided little direction for Wilson's collecting policy. As was previously mentioned, there was no official collection policy in 1917 other than to gather everything possibly connected to the war. Collecting on the front lines was vastly different from collecting on the homefront, and Wilson's efforts were hampered by the actual war. Most of the items Wilson marked for the museum were in use. Also, provenance was not easily accessible for the pieces from the opposition, such as German guns or medals that were picked up by soldiers and passed on to Wilson.

Wilson was also frustrated in his efforts by his interactions with the military. He was a soldier, but he was not directly part of the military's chain of command. Instead, Wilson worked for and reported to the IWM War Committee and Mond's Office of Works rather than the military command. His collecting efforts kept him at the front lines, but he was not part of the military operations in France. Therefore, though he was a soldier working with the military, he was not considered military personnel. This tenuous connection to the military placed Wilson's salary and the expenses for the collection in an awkward position. The IWM could not afford either amount as Wilson began collecting. Also, as a major, Wilson was left without a sufficient rank to force the upper-level command structure to assist him in his assignment. In France, those around him were focused on fighting the war. The military leadership did not have the time to plan for a museum.

These issues were eventually resolved. Discussions with Mond and Ffoulkes provided a clearer understanding of the items Wilson was to collect and the requirement of provenance for each item. Ffoulkes was determined that each item included in the collection was to have all necessary documentation and provenance. The War Cabinet settled the debate over who financially supported Wilson and the IWM collection. Circulars were distributed among the military, both to the men in leadership as well as the enlisted men in the trenches, in an effort to gain support for the IWM.<sup>34</sup> Wilson was able to rent a house in France and begin gathering artifacts and manuscripts for the proposed collection. In the end, Wilson's perseverance prevailed. His efforts led to the acquisition of a variety of personal and military items for the IWM representing the various nationalities involved in the conflict. In 1918 he was transferred to Palestine to obtain items from there as well.<sup>35</sup>

As Wilson began his work in Europe, the War Committee assigned its various members the task of gathering items from specific organizations. The individual members then created collecting sub-committees that would focus on assigned topics and would act as liaison for their specific areas. As mentioned previously, the overall task was unlike any collection that had been proposed. Yet, the War Committee's sub-committee structure aligned more closely with contemporary collecting practices. A sub-committee consisted of a few individuals devoted to amassing items about a particular topic, who turned the items over to a larger institution once the collecting process was complete. The distinctions between these sub-committees and their museological counterparts was their connection to the government and their assignment to gather contemporary items. For first time in England, modern or current items were believed to have historical value for society as a whole.



Each sub-committee was named after the organization, office, or items it collected. Some of the descriptive names have obvious correlations to the war effort, such as the Admiralty, Munitions, Air Services, and Red Cross sub-committees. Other sub-committees had less discernible titles. Members of the War Office comprised the War Office sub-committee that was later renamed War Trophies. This sub-committee was tasked with gathering all of the items and documentation about the Great War that was collected and created by the War Office. The Dominions sub-committee focused on the other nations in the Imperial realm and competed with the previously mentioned museums to gather items representing those nations. Records and Literature worked to gather all of the governmental records, including propaganda and literature, as well as the privately published literature written for or about the conflict. Finally, the women's work sub-committee focused mainly on the women's efforts on the homefront. This sub-committee was one of the first to create an exhibit that was displayed in museums throughout England promoting both women's roles in the war and the IWM in general. Later, the loan exhibitions sub-committee was added, but it did not function as the other collecting committees. This sub-committee dealt with the completed collections rather than the accumulation process. It was responsible for the schedule and transferring of every exhibit that was borrowed from the IWM by the local or regional institutions, such as the popular women's war work exhibition that began traveling to various museums in 1918.

The sub-committees were extremely conscientious in their responsibility to the project and tried to abide by the IWM's proposal to create as complete a collection as possible.<sup>36</sup> Each member of a particular sub-committee was selected for his or her connection to the assigned subject. For example, the members of the Admiralty sub-committee included representatives of

the Anti-Submarine Department and the Royal Navy Air Stations, along with the directors of Naval Construction, Naval Ordnance, and Torpedoes and Mines.<sup>37</sup> These men were already enmeshed in the field and had a knowledge of and ready access to the items that should be collected. This process was repeated throughout the other sub-committees, creating a structure remarkably conducive to item acquisition. Using individuals so involved in their particular fields was, however, impractical when applying appraisal policy. An institution's appraisal policy identifies which pieces are deemed valuable enough to be kept, and consequently, those that should not be kept, in the collection. Individuals closely connected to the items that they gather have a biased view regarding the worth of those items. Their bias can lead to an inaccurate assessment of the object's overall value. Also, as has been noted above, the collection of modern items was so new that the appraisal theory was not prepared to handle the mass amounts of materials that could be accrued. Sub-committee members were surrounded by items that could be included in the museum, for everything was connected to the war. The enthusiasm of the sub-committee members was apparent in the original museum housing plans submitted to the War Committee and then to the War Cabinet. The spacing requests for each sub-committee were enormous and led to extensive revisions. The final sub-committee policy placed a priority on items of "interesting provenance," creating a collection that included symbolic items, the value of which changed according to society's perception of the war.<sup>38</sup>

The collection was also expected to represent the citizenry as a whole, both the individuals fighting on the front lines and the men and women who worked on the homefront. In an effort to create a balanced collection, the IWM placed an assortment of notices in every newspaper throughout the United Kingdom requesting items to be donated to the museum. Between July

and August 1917, towns such as Somerset, Taunton, Grantham, and Manchester also reported that requests from the Office of Works were read at their town councils. Everyone was asked to donate any items that emphasized the “local and personal aspects of the war.”<sup>39</sup>

A separate request for photographs also appeared repeatedly in newspapers. Mond and Conway had not relinquished their goal to create a memorial, and they believed that if the museum could not be a government-sanctioned memorial, then, at the least, it could include a “Hall of Heroes,” which would impress upon the patrons the sacrifice and severity of the war. From London to Scotland, the newspapers ran requests for photographs, and from July 1917 throughout 1918 the War Committee posted almost a million advertisements. The Hall of Heroes was to include a photograph of “all officers and men who had given their lives or who have received honours and decorations” during the conflict.<sup>40</sup> The intention was to have the images posted along the entrance hallway of the museum. Patrons would then pass through the long hall of faces upon each visit to the collections, providing a solemn reminder of the cost of war. The hall would create a shrine and give memorial meaning to the massive museum being planned. Unfortunately, the War Committee did not have the intimate connection to the public that was cultivated by Louise Leblanc in France. English society did not want to surrender their family photographs or personal mementos to a governmental institution. Sadly, the desired “Hall of Heroes” never materialized.<sup>41</sup>

The failed memorial attempts did not limit the collection that was being gathered. As the war drew to a close, items began pouring into the Crystal Palace in London, which had been designated as a temporary home for the IWM. Guns were a main theme of the museum. They were used to honor the memorable battles of the war, and the men who had fought and died using

them.<sup>42</sup> The Munitions sub-committee worked to gather the new warfare technologies that had been invented for the Great War, including pieces as large as battery guns and as small as hand guns. With Wilson's help they were also able to collect hundreds of German and Turkish weapons.<sup>43</sup> Propaganda posters, post cards, and films were collected also. Souvenirs and memorabilia lined cases displayed for the public. As has been noted, exhibits were created to show how women supported the war on the homefront. Displays also represented the work done in the factories and by the railway stations in England. One of the most unique parts of the museum, according to Malvern, was the art collection which included more than 3,000 pieces in 1920.<sup>44</sup>

Even with all of these artifacts, the IWM held a precarious place in the community. As has been mentioned, museums had focused on technological and scientific progress and ethnographic collections highlighting the success of the empire prior to the war. The IWM was about the unbelievable destruction of the recent past, which in reality was still the present for many. Visitors came to see the exhibits in large numbers, but the museum did not achieve its educational and memorial goals. The museum was filled with exhibits created by men and women who had not served in the trenches. Returning soldiers did not want to be surrounded by displays of weaponry or the reminder that those on the homefront truly did not understand the reality of fighting the actual war. By the 1930s the original memorial aspect was forgotten. The place of education in exhibits became a debate within the museological and educational fields. Museum professionals surrendered their educational goals as a wartime exception and returned their focus to displaying history rather than educating the public. Obviously, the Great War had not ended all war, and the museum had failed to teach the British citizenry that they should never

fight on such a massive scale again. When the IWM expanded to include World War II, the museum's place was finally solidified in the community. The institution shifted to focus on the might of the British men and women to maintain justice, as had been proven by the later conflict.

### Notes

1. Gaynor Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (January, 1988): 77.
2. International War Museum, "History of IWM," accessed November 8, 2013. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/corporate/about-IWM>.
3. The use of the double lower-case f (ff) in Charles ffoulkes name has many roots. The Welsh alphabet granted the double lower-case f (ff) its own letter to represent the /f/ sound. The single f represented the /v/ sound. In England, the double lower-case f (ff) was used during the Middle Ages to represent a capital f (F). The use in both countries was normalized during the eighteenth century but proper names did not always bow to convention and the used of the double lower-case f (ff) can still be found today. (*The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* Vol. 47 (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1893), 212; Albert Bock and Benjamin Bruch, eds., *An Outline of the Standard Written Form of Cornish* (Cornwall: Cornish Language Partnership, 2008), 118-19.)
4. At this time in the United Kingdom, collectors referred to the souvenirs of war as war relics. This usage highlights the idea that museums housed items from the extremely distant past and not contemporary pieces. It also connects the collections to the reliquaries of the medieval era discussed in the Introduction.
5. Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 123.
6. "A War Bibliography," *Times* (London), February 15, 1917.
7. Ian Malcolm, MP, "A National War Museum, What Paris Has Done," *Times* (London), February. 20, 1917.
8. Charles ffoulkes, "A National War Museum: A Suggestion for the Tower of London," *Times* (London), February 21, 1917.
9. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 117-125.

10. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 125.
11. Charles ffoulkes, *Arms and The Tower* (London: John Murray, 1939), 93-4.
12. "National War Museum," *Newcastle Journal* (Tyne and Wear), May 2, 1917; "Food Growing in London Parks," *Western Times* (Devon), May 2, 1917; "Sir A. Mond and Proposed National War Museum," *Dundee Courier* (Angus), May 2, 1917; "Food Growing in London Parks," *Western Daily Press* (Bristol), May 2, 1917; "War Museums," *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (West Midlands), May 23, 1917;.
13. "The National War Museum," *Derby Daily Telegraph* (Derbyshire), August 8, 1917.
14. "British National War Museum," *Dundee Courier* (Angus), August 9, 1917.
15. Sue Malvern, "War, Memory, and Museums: Art and Artefact in the Imperial War Museum," *History Workshop Journal* 49 (Spring 2000):178.
16. Malvern, "War, Memory, and Museums," 178.
17. "British National War Museum," *Dundee Courier* (Angus).
18. "War Museum Opened," *Western Daily Press* (Bristol), June 10, 1920.
19. Memorandum on the Scope of the National War Museum, Sir Martin Conway to The First Commissioner, H.M. Office of Works, in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 134.
20. Memorandum on the National War Memorial and Museum by the First Commissioner of Works in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 135.
21. War Cabinet Minutes 221, Minute 2, 2 August 1917 in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 135.
22. War Cabinet Minutes 221, Minute 2, 2 August 1917.
23. Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial," 79.
24. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 117-123.

25. Stephen Badsey, "The 'IWM Series.' A Guide to the Imperial War Museum Collection of Archive Film of the First World War," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, & Television* 13, no. 2 (June, 1993) doi:10.1080/01439689300260211.
26. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 121.
27. Colonel John Stewart-Murray. Eighth Duke of Atholl, "Proposed National War Museum in Scotland," *Dundee Courier* (Angus), June 28, 1917; "Duke of Atholl's Appeal for a Scottish War Museum," *The Aberdeen Journal* (Aberdeenshire), June 28, 1917; "Duke of Atholl's plea for a Scots Memorial," *The Perthshire Advertiser* (Perthshire), July 4, 1917.
28. "War Museums, A Scheme for the Cities & Towns," *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (West Midlands), May 23, 1917.
29. "War Museums, A Scheme for the Cities & Towns," *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (West Midlands).
30. "War Museums, A Scheme for the Cities & Towns," *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (West Midlands).
31. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 113.
32. International War Museum, "History of IWM."
33. Anthony Richards, "The Department of Documents at the Imperial War Museum," *Contemporary British History* 18, no. 2 (Summer, 2004): 104.
34. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 127-32.
35. Paul Cornish, "Sacred Relics: Objects in the Imperial War Museum," in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory, and the First World War*, Nicholas Saunders, ed. (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004), 40.
36. "War Museums, A Scheme for the Cities & Towns," *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (West Midlands).
37. Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War*, 126.
38. Cornish, "Sacred Relics," 37.
39. "Grantham Town Council: The Question of Reprisals, National War Museum, Elementary Scholarships," *Grantham Journal* (Lincolnshire), August 4, 1917.

40. "The National War Museum: Photographic Record of All Fallen or Decorated," *Aberdeen Journal* (Aberdeenshire), December 19, 1917. See also "National War Museum," *Western Daily Press* (Bristol), July 17, 1917; "National War Museum: Heroes' Portraits Wanted," *Grantham Journal* (Lincolnshire), November 24, 1917; "National War Museum," *Lancashire Evening Post* (Lancashire), December 4, 1917; "National War Museum," *Dover Express* (Kent), November 23, 1917; "Our Local Warriors," *Middlesex Chronicle* (London), November 24, 1917; "National War Museum," *Hamilton Advisor* (Lanarkshire, ), December 29, 1917; "Photos for the War Museum," *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (West Midlands), August 2, 1917.
41. Malvern, "War, Memory, and Museums," 185.
42. Malvern, "War, Memory, and Museums," 185.
43. Malvern, "War, Memory, and Museums," 185-7.
44. Malvern, "War, Memory, and Museums," 188.



## **The Liberty Memorial at Kansas City, Missouri**

To many, Kansas City may seem an odd place to house the United States' National World War I Museum, but the efforts of the citizens of Kansas City during and immediately after the Great War make the location of the memorial and museum logical. In July 1918, at the National Association of State Libraries Twenty-first Annual Meeting, the members from Kansas noted a minimal increase in governmental support, both vocal and monetary, for the state library. Little else was said about state collections for, as the members from Missouri explained, the state librarian and the rest of the citizenry were focused on "winning the war."<sup>1</sup> This meeting was months before the people of Kansas City, from both Missouri and Kansas, came together to begin the process for the creation the Liberty Memorial, but the comments highlight the deep connection to the Great War felt by Kansas Citians, as they were frequently referred to in their own news reports. With a main train junction located in Kansas City, a large portion of the soldiers passed through and sometimes stayed in the city at some point during the military build-up before the war. This military presence in the city linked the people of Kansas and Missouri to the war in a way that Kansas Citians felt was unique among the midwestern states. Kansas City was also well known for its overwhelming support for a variety of war efforts. One monetary example of such support can be found in the citizens' response to campaign requests for funding during the war. More often than not, the local civilians would provide more money than was asked of them during fundraising. In one county, each of the five Liberty Bond drives received over \$2,000,000 above the requested subscriptions amount.<sup>2</sup>

## **Kansas Citizens and Their Memorial**

Kansas City's connection to the war and its community's commitment to supporting the war effort on the homefront merged to create a memorial and museum that has stood for almost a century but began with a short editorial in a newspaper and a dinner conversation. One tumultuous year and a half after the United States entered the war, and a few short days before the Armistice, the *Kansas City Journal* ran an opinion piece on November 9, 1918, calling for a "memorial of gratitude for those who had given their lives in the war."<sup>3</sup> The editor, Celbe C. Cline, suggested a Victory Monument to honor "the regiments of youthful crusaders who gloriously asserted their manhood at Soissons and St. Mihiel . . . a memorial befitting their achievement."<sup>4</sup> This short editorial sparked a city-wide response. Unlike the museums created during the conflict in France and the United Kingdom, the Liberty Memorial was always intended as a form of memorialization rather than the creation of a social memory or propaganda. The general public was directly involved in its creation. The days following the first editorial saw multiple articles in a variety of newspapers commenting on this new idea to create a city memorial. In some areas, the idea of a monument or memorial had already taken hold, and these articles shared the plans underway to complete previously suggested tasks. Local newspapers also reported a variety of individual monuments already being erected. On November 12, 1918, the *Kansas City Star* reported that Central College, in Fayette, Missouri, dedicated a flagpole in honor of the five students who had died in France, as well as the three hundred other students who had fought in the war.<sup>5</sup> In the same issue of the *Kansas City Star*, an article noted that in Olathe, Kansas, \$2,200 was raised to create a monument for the soldiers of Johnson County,

twenty of whom “were killed in action or died of disease.”<sup>6</sup> For the most part, the opinion pieces called for action to be taken to ensure that a memorial could be built in Kansas City itself.

By November 17, 1918, a little over a week after the initial article, Mayor James Cowgill of Kansas City, Missouri responded to the calls of his constituency. Kansas City is unique for many reasons, but prime among them is that the city is divided between the two states of Kansas and Missouri. The calls for a memorial came from both sides of the city, and Cowgill's response was intended for all Kansas Citians, regardless of their state. The *Kansas City Star* again ran the article, but this time it was front-page news. Cowgill's response was threefold. He focused on community support, caution, and the necessary experience of the local war organizations.

First and foremost, Cowgill understood the importance of public support for the memorial, and his first request was for the people to define the best possible way to honor the soldiers and sailors who had served. A memorial such as the Kansas Citians were requesting was a large project, and there was a long list of basic questions to be answered before the monument could be built, among them, what was the monument to be called, where was it to be located, and what it would even look like. Cowgill spoke of the committees that would have to be formed, the meetings that would have to be held, and the campaigns to raise funds that would have to be established. This endeavor would be a long-term project lasting far beyond Cowgill's tenure in office. For in the end, the memorial was not for the organizations or the government. Cowgill stated that this memorial “should be the project of every loyal citizen of Kansas City . . . [and] when the city finally decides, the decision should be the crystallization of public opinion.”<sup>7</sup>

Cowgill especially wanted input from the individuals who had assisted the war effort in any way. Kansas City had multiple organizations which had spent considerable hours diligently working

throughout the war to support the soldiers and sailors who had served and died in the battles of the Great War. Cowgill believed that the men and women already working for the war effort would have a better understanding of the lives of the soldiers and sailors than the general public, as will be shown below.

Cowgill also urged caution. He reminded the Kansas Citizens of what he referred to as the “wasted monuments” dedicated to both the Civil and Spanish-American wars, which were created throughout the United States by a variety of citizens and organizations “in the midst of patriotic enthusiasm without plans and without reference to the future.”<sup>8</sup> The Spanish-American War had ended just twenty years earlier in 1898. The Civil War had ended a short fifty-three years before in 1865. Both conflicts were familiar to many of the contemporary generation, and there were still living veterans from both wars. Cowgill noted that many monuments and other such institutions would appear throughout the nation as the current war came to an end, but even the memorials that grew out of the best of intentions would be “ludicrous” if they were done without the proper planning.<sup>8</sup> Cowgill’s vision of Kansas City’s memorial was one that would proudly stand for generations. It would be a constant reminder of the efforts of the soldiers who had fought and died during the conflict. Yet, it would also represent the compassion and gratitude of the men and women on the homefront who wished to commemorate the soldiers’ accomplishments. Cowgill wanted to create a memorial with an eye towards the future that would proudly symbolize the sacrifices of all of the citizens during the war. He asked for the necessary time to design and build such a tribute.

Finally, the mayor also indicated that a letter would be sent to each of the local organizations engaged in “war work.” Cowgill defined these institutions as those involved in any activity or

campaign that required “time and money . . . to further the war.”<sup>10</sup> They had supported the war effort at home and included the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), the Red Cross, the United War Workers, the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), the Liberty Loan Committee, the Knights of Columbus, the Jewish Welfare Workers, and the Salvation Army. As previously mentioned, the mayor believed these people and organizations were closest to the war on the homefront. They would be the most knowledgeable about honoring both the living and the dead of the Great War. Every citizen’s opinion was desired; however, the opinions of the men and women engaged in war work would provide a clearer interpretation of the war and the men who had fought it. With the understanding that it would take time to create a monument for the returning soldiers that was “worthy of their deeds,” Cowgill asked for patience, caution, and volunteers.<sup>11</sup>

The mayor sent out the call, and the city responded en masse. The opinion articles about the soldiers and sailors’ memorial began the next day and ran for weeks. Every day saw new articles with some suggestion. More opinion columns were published urging caution and planning, as any monument erected in Kansas City should be a source of pride not only for those they honored but for the city. The memorial should be “something worthy of the occasion . . . a source of delight and gratification for generations to come.”<sup>12</sup> Individuals who did not choose the newspapers to voice their opinion responded directly to the mayor. The mayor’s office received “scores of letters,” as the people wrote in with their ideas.<sup>13</sup> On November 20, 1918, the memorial was once again on the front page of the *Kansas City Star*; this time to report on the overwhelming response of the citizens. Cowgill urged citizens to put politics aside and attend the next council meeting to address this issue.

The mayor's request did not stop the people from providing their opinions. Suggestions for buildings, parks, memorial shafts, and museums, continued to pour into the mayor's office.<sup>14</sup> Other suggestions were written as eloquent, or sometimes not so eloquent, letters to the editor. Other types of newspaper articles also continued to appear from both sides of the city with a variety of monument suggestions that reflected the diversity of the citizenry. Other individuals, not satisfied with writing letters, created drawings with their ideas of what the memorial should look like. One included the actual architectural dimensions as well as an artistic tribute to be created with statues of soldiers and angels.<sup>15</sup>

A column titled "Speaking the Public Mind," on November 23, 1918, was the first to suggest using the hill or "knoll" across from the train station as a possible location that would be both fiscally responsible — it was already owned by the city — and logical — out of the way of city traffic but still downtown for locals and visitors to have access.<sup>16</sup> This site, across from Union Station, quickly became the most popular location suggestion among the commentaries.<sup>17</sup>

Plans for the actual memorial did not solidify as quickly. The variety among the proposed memorials reflected the diversity of the community and highlighted the eventual compromises that would later be employed to create the Liberty Memorial. It would be impossible for Cowgill to use all of the recommendations provided by the public. Yet, upon review, one can find the pieces of the final memorial consisting of a monument, a war museum, and a civic building throughout the suggestions. One idea, from a prominent citizen, J. I. Compton of Trimble-Compton Produce, focused on a combination of ideas. He suggested a park downtown that included a gallery to display reminders of the war and plaques with the names of the Kansas City men who had fought in the war.<sup>18</sup> Other ideas included a memorial building consisting of a

museum, library, and archive, which would preserve the “trophyes, inventions, equipment, and materials” from this war, as well as, “newspapers, maps, charts, models, writings, letters of soldiers, books, pictures, and whatever contributions to the correct history.”<sup>19</sup>

Other suggestions pushed for something “more practical,” such as an armory or other such civic building to honor the soldiers.<sup>20</sup> These practical buildings were popular suggestions.

Colonel R. Bryson Jones, a commander in the National Guard, agreed and pushed for the idea of a memorial armory that would be both useful and artistic.<sup>21</sup> Major F. Warner Karling,

Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, suggested a building that could be built for and used by the city’s various veterans organizations as well as house a museum for relics.<sup>22</sup>

Specific organizations such as the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) saw an opportunity to have the city fund a memorial building to house an association. William E. Connelley, the

secretary of the KSHS, suggested the creation of a memorial building along with a new historical association, the Missouri Valley Historical Society. This new society would include members of

the returning forces, and therefore, the new memorial building “should contain the headquarters of these soldiers, for they are sure to form some society to perpetuate the memory of their

services.”<sup>23</sup> Connelley took it one step further to say that because this new building would also house the new soldier’s organization, it should be maintained by the state.<sup>24</sup> Other concerned

citizens suggested the city create a building, or two if needed, to house the city hall, court house, and city officials. These buildings would include a “hall or suite of rooms” to house the items

commemorating the war.<sup>25</sup> Each of these suggestions focused on the proposed building’s utility rather than its memorialization.

Two other suggestions along these lines were considered seriously. The first was the creation of a Victory Stadium, which could “accommodate two good ball grounds and all kinds of outdoor sports.”<sup>26</sup> The second was creation of a Memorial Highway, with the name of a fallen soldier at each mile marker. The highway would have been an extremely large project and was to be supplemented with an executive mansion and a state park in the Ozarks. Together, the highway, the mansion, and the state park, could be considered a fitting monument to the soldiers’ sacrifice because “No monument that is not a thing of service can fittingly commemorate the [soldiers’] heroic achievements,” according to J. Allen Prewitt, the state representative from Jackson County.<sup>27</sup>

The artistic community also added their opinions, but even their proposals leaned towards the memorial’s usefulness to society. Suggestions included art galleries or a memorial music hall in the heart of the city, which would include a war museum in the same building.<sup>28</sup> These submissions focused on a National Memorial rather than the local one. As one proposal stated, the “United States needs such a hall more than Kansas City,” and such a building would lift the national reputation of Kansas City beyond that of transportation and finances.<sup>29</sup> Some individuals did focus on the artistic aspects of the memorial. Articles mentioned the older memorials of Europe and China, suggesting that Kansas City should follow the pattern set by their grandeur.<sup>30</sup> One woman even suggested a triumphal arch “patterned after the one in Paris.”<sup>31</sup>

Education was not left out of the opinions rolling in from the public. While many suggested collections to stir remembrance of the event, a local businessman, William B. Henderson, wanted the memorial to be taken much further than a physical monument to the dead. He suggested the conversion of Kansas City’s Polytechnic Institute into a “Liberty Institute,” which would be used



to teach “posterity the higher ideas of life for which the soldiers and sailors fought.”<sup>32</sup> Henderson provided a complete outline, not only for the conversion of Polytechnic but also for the perpetual funding of this new academic complex. His proposal included many of — what he considered — the community benefits such an institute would provide. One of the primary benefits was, according to Henderson, a “propaganda department . . . to teach the responsibility of citizenship and elevate [the population’s] thinking so that infractions of citizenship . . . [would] automatically make an outcast of the guilty one.”<sup>33</sup>

Some organizations supported specific items to be included as part of the larger memorial. The American Forestry Association, for example, pushed for the inclusion of memorial trees to be planted in conjunction with the still-undefined memorial. Their president, Mr. Charles Lathrop Pack, noted that “there can be no more fitting memorial to the soldier dead of your city than the living growing trees.”<sup>34</sup>

One of the final recommendations, before the initial community meeting, was to combine all of the suggestions into the creation of a downtown civic center for the city. This idea included a museum for war trophies, a public park, a civic building, and an institute for learning, all of which would be built near the existing art museum and the public library, thus creating an area of which Kansas Citians could be proud.<sup>35</sup> There seems to have been an endless flow of ideas and opinions from the citizens, though the majority focused on the possibility of a civic building, a museum, or a monument. The mayor had said the final memorial would reflect public opinion, and the public was more than willing to provide their thoughts.

In the days following the Armistice, as the fervor over the monument was running through the city, the prominent lumber magnate Robert Alexander (R. A.) Long went to dinner with a

group of his acquaintances. Years later, Long's dinner conversation would be reported upon in the Kansas City newspapers as the beginning of the Liberty Memorial. Long did not want a civic or utilitarian building to represent the sacrifice of the Nation's soldiers. Instead he suggested a "monument that will reach into the skies and remain in everlasting tribute."<sup>36</sup> Long's belief that the use of a civic building would diminish the significance of the memorial was prophetic, as other buildings lost their memorial status to their every day uses. One such example is the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), which was created as "a suitable memorial to commemorate the part of Alabama and Alabamians in the world war."<sup>37</sup> The building created for the ADAH was designed to house the archival records for the state of Alabama, but the original plan dedicated the building to the combatants of the Great War and included a Memorial Hall of Flags. The Hall of Flags was to remind generations to come that the building would stand as a commemoration of the war and the men who served in the armed forces. Later, as the archives expanded, the hall was removed, and today only a few state historians even remember that the building was originally planned as a memorial.

It is of note that the *Kansas City Sun*, a weekly African-American newspaper, largely ignored this month-long frenzy of suggestions and editorial articles. Not one of the publications printed by this paper in November or December of 1918 includes any suggestions for the memorial, or any commentary on the matter at all. As a matter of fact, the memorial is not even mentioned in the *Kansas City Sun* until the following October, during the fund-raising campaigns. These articles indicate a large support for the campaign and the memorial in general, yet, there is little indication of African-American support for the creation of a memorial in 1918 through the

editorials or opinion pieces, such as those found in the *Kansas City Star* and other local newspapers.

The public invitation to the first council meeting was published in the *Kansas City Star* on November 22, 1918. The meeting was held the following day and included the mayor, the city council, and other members of the various civic and war work organizations that had supported the war effort, as the mayor had requested.<sup>38</sup> Although the community was invited to attend, this meeting was not open for public comments. The main concern of this meeting was to begin to “furnish the necessary machinery to put the monument proposal under way.”<sup>39</sup> Long was given the position of temporary Committee Chairman, and Mrs. Herbert Allen made the temporary Committee Secretary until a permanent organization could be established. Most important, this meeting was used to plan for a large public conference to take place the following Friday on November 29, 1918. The committee made plans to deliver personal invitations to every individual and organization active in civic and war work for the following week’s public conference, regardless of political or religious affiliation.<sup>40</sup> On Tuesday, November 26, 1918, 1,000 invitations were prepared and sent, inviting the suggested parties to participate in the upcoming meeting.<sup>41</sup> The general public was again asked to attend, and they turned out in force to share their preferences for the monument. The *Kansas City Star*’s front page article on the day of the meeting described the excitement, stating

In no recent public project have citizens voluntarily taken a greater interest than in the proposal to erect a memorial to the soldiers and sailors who went out from Kansas City, ready to sacrifice their lives for world democracy.<sup>42</sup>

At the public conference, Long accepted the permanent position as head of the Joint Committee and was given the task of assembling the rest of a committee of 100 citizens, which

would later be called the Liberty Memorial Association (LMA).<sup>43</sup> The responsibilities of the committee included naming the memorial movement, setting the groundwork for a permanent organization to oversee the current creation and future continuation of the memorial, and proposing how to “carry out the great project.”<sup>44</sup> The mayor also handed over all of the suggestion letters which had been received by City Hall.<sup>45</sup> The letters had continued to flood the mayor’s office up to the day of the event.<sup>46</sup>

After this meeting, the city’s newspapers saw an increase in editorials regarding the handling of the memorial or monument. The citizens were determined that the memorial should not be a matter of politics. Instead, Kansas Citizens demanded that the effort to honor the soldiers and sailors “should be scrupulously guarded from official, governmental, and political auspices or control and placed in the hands of a civic committee.”<sup>47</sup> Those in power worked to honor the wishes of the public. The governmental officials who were placed on the committee were taken from both the upper and lower houses of the state legislature, and both parties were equally represented. The intent was always to have the committee consist of citizens, not politicians.<sup>48</sup> The previously mentioned Colonel R. Bryson Jones resigned his post as Commander of the 7th Regiment of the National Guard when he was asked to take spot on the committee in an effort to show he was an unbiased participant.<sup>49</sup>

Newspapers continued to print suggestions regarding the type of monument, though at a much slower rate. On December 11, 1918 *The Kansas City Sun*, noted that “public opinion was generally divided as to whether the memorial should take the form of a monument or of a public building.”<sup>50</sup> The advisory committee and the association were tasked with the final memorial decision after reviewing all of the information provided by the public and the civic and war work

organizations. The committee also reached out to noted architects throughout the United States and invited them to submit possible ideas for the memorial.<sup>51</sup> Months of debate passed before the Joint Committee was prepared to put the decision to a vote, and a formal ballot was created including seven different types of memorials. These memorials ranged from artistic and ornamental monuments to an educational memorial university. The vote was almost unanimous. The memorial was to be “a monument plus a building not for utilitarian purposes but to house trophies of war with other matters closely related thereto.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Funding, Location, and Other Issues**

With the decision finally made, the next step was to find the funding for this massive undertaking. George E. Kessler, the Superintendent of Parks for the Kansas City, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad, informed the rest of the committee that to complete their desired memorial it would cost at least \$2,000,000. No one was willing to believe this estimate, and many months of research followed before the committee was willing to agree to the suggested amount. A public fundraiser was created to raise \$2,500,000.<sup>53</sup> Kansas Citizens responded to this new campaign just as they had to each of the previous requests for money during the conflict. The response was overwhelming.

The LMA planned for the original campaign to last from October 27 to November 5, 1919. Advertisements and articles ran daily in most of the local newspapers, including *The Kansas City Star*, *The Kansas City Times*, and *The Kansas City Sun*. Many of the advertisements focused on the struggle of the soldier. The association even created four “Lest the Ages Forget” advertisements. Each highlighted an individual soldier who had sacrificed his life on the fields of France and urged citizens to support the soldier’s memorial. The LMA paid for these

advertisements to run in all of the Kansas City newspapers.<sup>54</sup> Each day the newspapers would report the Fund tally from the previous day and encourage citizens to show their patriotic support of the Nation's soldiers. Long spoke at multiple gatherings, pleading with the public to support the Liberty Memorial Fund and even donated \$80,000 to the fund himself in the first days of the campaign. Pledges for over a million dollars were collected in the first three days of the campaign. On Sunday, November 2, 1919, with three days left in the fund drive, clergymen of various faiths urged their church members to donate to the campaign. Still the association feared they would not meet their goal in the allotted time, and preparations were made to extend the campaign. Committee member J. C. Nichols stated that until the Fund went "over the top," as their soldiers had done in France, the campaign would continue. *The Kansas City Star* echoed Nichols on November 6, 1919. "Went Over the Top" the headline read. In less than two weeks, the memorial campaign received subscriptions for \$2,517,000 from 100,000 of Kansas City's men, women, and children.<sup>55</sup> Later reports lowered the subscription numbers to 83,000 individuals, calculating that more than a quarter of the 325,000 citizens living in the city donated to the cause. According to the LMA's commentary, this subscription was unique and unsurpassed in the United States at this time.<sup>56</sup> The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates that this amount would be the equivalent of raising over \$34,000,000 in the same amount of time in 2014.<sup>57</sup> This impressive outpouring of monetary support from a single community was sufficient for the Liberty Memorial; however, it could not compete financially with the governmental support of the Imperial War Museum or the Bibliothèque-Musée. Governmental funding allowed the museums in the United Kingdom and France to collect and house much more than the LMA could even hope for. Yet, more important, the outcome of Kansas City's fundraiser indicates the

public's overwhelming support for the Liberty Memorial, which, as has been discussed in previous chapters, was not as readily apparent in either of the other countries.

After the appropriate funding was in hand, the location of the future memorial was chosen. As the anonymous letter to the editor had suggested over a year earlier, the "knoll" across from the train station was the prime location. Unfortunately, the city owned only a portion of the suggested eight-and-one-half-acre park. Most local landowners were persuaded to sell the remaining tracts to the city for about \$250,000. There were, however, some owners who did not want to part with their property, and they sought help from the local courts. The Supreme Court of Missouri denied their appeals, and by the end of January 1920, the Association had moved from the problem of finding a location to the search for an architect.<sup>58</sup>

The association retained the President of the American Institute of Architects, Thomas R. Kimball, as an advisor on a national competition to find the best architect for the project. Local architectural firms competed with others from San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New York. The desired result was a memorial that would inspire the nation as a symbol of peace. Prominent architects were brought in by the LMA from New York, Seattle, and Detroit to judge the competition. On July 21, 1921, after a unanimous agreement by the judges, H. Van Buren Magonigle from New York signed a contract as the architect for the future memorial.<sup>59</sup>

Five months later, during the National Convention of the American Legion held in Kansas City on November 1, 1921, the site was dedicated for the building of the memorial. People turned out by the thousands. In attendance at the ceremony, for the first time since the end of the war, were generals representing the *Entente*: Marshal Ferdinand Foch from France, Admiral Lord David Beatty from England, Baron Lieutenant-General Alphonse Jacques de Dixmude from

Belgium, General Armando Diaz from Italy, and, of course, General John J. Pershing from the United States. Each general was given the opportunity to speak to the crowd, and their speeches were printed as part of the program that was handed out to visitors. The crowd spread over the entire park as 100,000 people came to see the dedication and to hear from the generals who had won the Great War. The presence of these military heroes was seen as approval for the city's future memorial and museum.

What had started so quickly finally bogged down in the reality of the work. It was three years from the initial meeting in 1918 until the site dedication of the Liberty Memorial in 1921. The frenzy of newspaper articles, funding campaigns, and architectural contests gave way to association meeting notes and architectural designs. It was another three years before the cornerstone was dedicated in 1924 in a ceremony meant to remind the public of the memorial's purpose. More meetings and construction crews followed. Two more years passed before the Monument's final dedication in 1926. Instead of the original memorial with a single building for a museum, Magonigle designed two buildings to flank the memorial tower. Each building had an assigned purpose. Memory Hall was originally constructed to be the meeting place for patriotic civic organizations "such as the Gold Star League, the War Mothers, and the American Legion."<sup>60</sup> A bronze-cast list of the names of the 441 Kansas Citians who died during the conflict and memorial paintings were placed on the walls as a constant reminder of all that had been lost in the war. The other building housed the museum collection and began as a flag shrine that slowly expanded to house documents and artifacts of the war. Each decoration in the museum building was meant to evoke feelings of peace, for the conflict had ended and world peace would surely follow.<sup>61</sup> The artistic frieze and the landscaping of the site would take an additional decade



to complete, finishing in 1935 and 1938 respectively. These pieces were not officially dedicated, but continue to be considered part of the original monument.

### **Collection**

From inception to dedication and down through the years, the Liberty Memorial has been a community-supported project. Much like its counterparts in France and the United Kingdom, the Liberty Memorial's early collection related more closely to the eighteenth-century cabinets of curiosity. It combined items usually included in libraries, archives and museums.<sup>62</sup> The original Flag Shrine contained flags from a large portion of the countries that fought in the conflict, as well as a few regimental flags, and a state flag from every state in the United States.<sup>63</sup> As early as 1919, citizens began donating items to be used in the museum collection. The majority of the contributions to the repository were provided by citizens from Kansas City and the surrounding towns. Artifacts such as scrapbooks, gold star flags, postcards, and letters from soldiers all found their way into the small basement under the Liberty Memorial's museum as they were donated by the family and friends of soldiers who had fought. The returning soldiers added items as well. Shell fragments and pieces of city rubble picked up on the battlefields, uniforms, helmets, and photographs were all supplied by soldiers over the first couple of decades.

The LMA had limited access to the items that could end up in their museum. The museums in England and France both had the advantage of location over the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City. The IWM and the Bibliothèque-Musée both were closer to the battlefields and the men in the trenches, while the Liberty Memorial had to make do with what they could gather from returned soldiers and the friends and family members who had been in contact with the soldiers during the war. The association did petition a few governmental entities to receive some of the

artillery pieces after they were decommissioned at the end of the war, but the response was limited. The first artifacts purchased by the LMA were United States propaganda posters. Unfortunately, a catalogue of items was not established by the institution's original creators. The members of the association were tasked with the collection, housing, and preservation of all donated or purchased artifacts. Yet, none of the members had any professional experience in the fields of libraries, archives, or museums. This lack of specific training is highlighted by the diversity of the museum's collection. Association members were purchasing archival materials, such as the propaganda posters, while gathering archival documents and museological objects. It was not until 1976 that the museum was able to hire its first curator and the exhibits began to improve and draw larger crowds.<sup>64</sup> In 1996 the Liberty Memorial underwent a massive renovation which was extended to include an expansion of the Museum. The current version of the Liberty Memorial Museum reopened in 2006.

The Liberty Memorial did not have the educational goals found in the other European museums. Although it included a museum in the original construction, the purpose of the Liberty Memorial was always focused on memorialization of the society that fought and sacrificed for their country. Kansas Citians' diverse preferences were apparent, but the people came together to create a lasting memorial that included the preservation of both documents and artifacts. The news editorials alone articulated the public's need to create something that would stand for generations as a monument to the sacrifices of all of the American men and women who served in World War I. More than either of the other museums in this study, the Liberty Memorial focused on the people who supported and created it. The goals of the local community was much broader than its specific contemporary society. Kansas Citians intended the monument and

museum to be available to the generations that would follow. These individuals envisioned a much larger audience, one that was not restricted to the contemporary locality. The vision of those early citizens would not be realized until 2004, when the United States' Congress designated the Kansas City Liberty Memorial and Museum as the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial.<sup>65</sup>

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63. Liberty Memorial Association, *The Liberty Memorial: Kansas City, Missouri*, (Liberty Memorial Association, 1950): 23.
64. Donovan, *Lest the Ages Forget*, 140.
65. "Museum and Memorial," National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial, accessed December 12, 2013 <http://theworldwar.org/explore/museum-and-memorial>.
66. Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial," 77.

## Conclusion

The Great War did not stop society from collecting and preserving items deemed valuable. If, as Gaynor Kavanagh proposed, a test were administered then the preservation of the existing repositories and the creation of new ones would indicate a passing grade. The LAMs survived, though their methodology and theory would continue to shift as the institutions embraced the new ideas presented during the conflict. One of the primary changes to the museological practice was the conception of using these institutions as memorials to shape social thought about the war. The idea that the LAMs were to honor the events and individuals they represented shifted the repositories from storehouses of research and relics to hallowed halls. During the war and through the years immediately following it, society tried to define the memory of the Great War using the written documents and the artifacts created during the conflict. The Bibliothèque-Musée's preservation of trench newspapers was intended to provide future generations with an understanding of the common soldiers' daily experiences and sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> The halls of photographs or flags used to honor the memory of fallen soldiers at the IWM and the Liberty Memorial also provided solemn reminders of the individual and national sacrifices, and established the soldiers' heroism in the minds of their communities. Daniel J. Sherman defines "collective or social memory . . . as the ideas, assumptions, and knowledges that structure the relationship of individuals and groups to the immediate as well as the more distant past."<sup>1</sup> Using this definition, each of these repositories was immersed in the creation of a social memory for its respective communities. The collections housed in these institutions provided a specific understanding of the historic events, and those interpretations were supported by documentation and artifacts. The desire for memorialization is most prominent in the creation of the Liberty

Memorial. Yet, the founders of both the IWM and the Bibliothèque-Musée wished to create a repository that honored the soldiers and provided an interpretation of current events for future historians.

This need to define current events for future generations also led to the creation and institution of contemporary collecting policies. Creating repositories of historical artifacts and documents to describe current social events was revolutionary for museums of the era. Science museums and government archives collected modern items prior to the Great War with differing intentions. Governmental archives, such as Colbert's Royal Library for Louis XIV, were amassed to provide the necessary information for political maneuvering. These repositories preserved information that impacted current events. Future historians and researchers were not an intended audience for the collected documents or manuscripts. Science museums also gathered artifacts that emphasized scientific progression or evolution. Although these pieces were to be stored in perpetuity for research, the collections did not represent current society. The oddities or curiosities collected for the ethnographic museums were for entertainment rather than for education and study. During the war and the interwar years, institutions continued to search for items from older societies, but it was also understood that the current events would have a historical significance. Museological theory shifted to include the gathering of items that would define the present-day events to future generations. Each of the institutions approached contemporary collecting in a different way, and some of the practices were more successful than others. Louise Leblanc's personal connections within governmental and artistic circles paved the way for the Bibliothèque-Musée to create a diverse contemporary collection. The IWM's sub-committee structure provided access to numerous experts in a variety of fields with an



understanding of the value of the collected items. The Liberty Memorial acquired fewer items due to its distance from the battlefields. Instead, the Kansas City repository based its collection on the community's personal connection to the conflict and to the institution. As with today's institutions, the founders of these repositories were forced to refine their appraisal and collection development policies to include contemporary collections. The gathered items were then used as a memorial for the living generations, and to define the impact of the current events to future communities.

Another important practice instituted during the conflict relates specifically to the role of museums in education. In 2007, the International Council of Museums declared that "education, study and enjoyment" are the purposes of the present-day museum.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the Great War, collecting repositories had yet to determine the duty of these institutions as teaching facilities within their communities.<sup>4</sup> As was noted in the introduction, the Ecole des Chartes trained archivists and paleologists to assist historians in accessing documents for scholarly pursuits. A few universities housed museums dedicated to natural history, geology, or other closely related matters. The collectors connected to these schools who gathered scientific pieces allowed researchers access for scholastic study. Most museums did not provide education for members of society not involved in academia. Writing in 1904, David Murray noted that other scientific and technological repositories were considered "instruments of research" for the academic community, but ethnographic or history repositories were exhibits of entertainment.<sup>5</sup> The general museums of the early twentieth century were "regarded too much as mere exhibitions and [were] too little employed for practical teaching."<sup>6</sup>

At the onset of the war, the United Kingdom instituted popular traveling exhibits with the sole intention of teaching the public about health, hygiene, and food preservation. For the duration of the war, the Adult Education Committee supported these exhibits. Unfortunately, the committee was dissolved in 1919, and exhibits as an instructional tool did not continue during the interwar years. Many curators did not believe that public education, for children or adults, should be considered a part of museological theory or practice. Frank Leney, the curator of the Norwich Castle Museum, went so far as to question the place of educational activities within “the scope of museum work.”<sup>7</sup> The role of scholastic learning via exhibits was not removed completely from the field. It was especially prevalent in the children’s museums found in the United States. Yet, this attitude did slow the role of adult education through museums.

One of the most important museological and archival practices traced to the Great War is the idea of community-based institutions. Today, a large number of “community archives” and “community museums” exist throughout the world. These repositories are loosely defined as “collections of material gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control.”<sup>8</sup> The “community” attached to these repositories can be defined as a specific neighborhood, a minority group, or the constituency of the museum or archive. The essential feature of these institutions is “the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular group and/or locality.”<sup>9</sup> The collections represented in this study could be considered precursors to the modern community-based collections. The Liberty Memorial in Kansas City is the greatest example of a repository created by a single community in the era. It both supports and expands the early understanding of community archives and museums decades before such community-supported

institutions were considered a part of museological or archival theory. More than either of the other museums in this study, the founders of the Liberty Memorial focused on the general populace. In Kansas City, the citizens spoke up and voted for the value of their museums. From the creation and design to the consistent support received through the twentieth century, this museum has been a publicly-maintained institution. The original community valued the sacrifice of their soldiers and chose to create a memorial that would highlight the diversity of its society. The end result was a memorial, a museum, and a civic hall with artistic expressions the creators felt could rival the ones found in Europe. Yet, this institution was about more than the founding constituency or local neighborhoods. For, though it was created by a specific community, Kansas Citians always intended the monument and museum to be for the generations of the future beyond the borders of their town. The support of the community also allowed the Liberty Memorial to maintain its original goals. The IWM and the Bibliothèque-Musée expanded their collections and redefined their purposes to include other historical events. The solid support received from a specific constituency allowed the Liberty Memorial to continue as a memorial solely dedicated to the sacrifices made by the men and women from Kansas City during the Great War.

Community-based institutions also provide a distinct voice for the minorities often missing from earlier museums. This aspect can be found in the IWM and the Bibliothèque-Musée. The founders of the IWM specifically promoted the repository's need for the representation of all society through their institution. The women's war work exhibits were placed alongside the military collections to emphasize the different ways individuals participated in or supported the war efforts. The Leblancs' desire to embrace the diversity of the society involved in the conflict

within their collection also illustrated a desire for a less biased representation. Although these institutions were not so obviously supported by their local communities, the need to include such heterogeneity in their repositories highlights the intended audience of these museums as a larger constituency than the surrounding neighborhoods or the contemporary population. Today, community-based archives and museums continue to represent the societies which create them and provide understanding for those individuals that exist outside of the designated cultural heritage.

The LAMs passed Kavanagh's "test" of the Great War.<sup>10</sup> The number of these institutions continued to increase throughout the interwar years and the Second World War. The United States alone boasts 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums today, and the United Kingdom claims 2,500 museums.<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to tally accurately every museum in the world, but the latest reports indicate that there are currently more than 55, 000 museums in over 200 countries.<sup>12</sup>

Within these modern repositories, one continues to find the mark of the Great War. Elements of social history appear in various types of collections around the world. Singular communities gather collections and create institutions to represent their cultural heritage. Professional interpretation of documents, manuscripts, and artifacts shapes how society understands its past and present. Education is an expected part of museum exhibitions; and the LAMs enhance the scholastic experience of students and the general public around the world. Military collections provide the communities with their respective country's military history. Museums and archives stand as memorial institutions to the historic events of the past and present. The tragedy of the Great War and the response of its global community provided another brick in the foundation for the LAMs.

## Notes

1. Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 2.
2. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France*, 16.
3. "Museum Definition," International Council of Museums, accessed June 9, 2014 <http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/>.
4. It should be noted that libraries of this era do not fit this pattern, especially those in the United States. Beginning in the eighteenth century, libraries were designed specifically for the education of the public.
5. David Murray, *Museums: Their History and their Use* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1904), 1:260.
6. Murray, *Museums: Their History and their Use*, 1: 259-260.
7. Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 160.
8. Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepard, "Whose Memory, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy, and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 73.
9. Flinn, et al., "Whose Memory, Whose Archives?," 73.
10. Gaynor Kavanagh, "Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (January, 1988), 77.
11. Justin Grimes, et al., *Museum Universe Data File Documentation* (Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2014), 2; "Frequently Asked Questions," Museum Association, accessed January 2, 2015 <http://www.museumsassociation.org/about/frequently-asked-questions>.
12. *Museums of the World* 21st ed., (Munich: De Gruyter Saur, 2014).

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*Kansas City Star* Kansas City, Mo (1918-1920, 1924).

*Kansas City Sun.* Kansas City, Mo (1918-1920, 1924).

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*Middlesex Chronicle.* London (1917-1919).

*Newcastle Journal.* Tyne and Wear (1917-1919)

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