

# Luke Lea, the Legionnaires, and the Legacy of Two Wars: The Politics of Memory in the Mind of a Nashville Progressive, 1915–1945

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OVER THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAYS OF 1918–1919, Luke Lea, colonel of the Tennessee-raised 114th Field Artillery, tried to capture Wilhelm II, the former German kaiser, and take him to Paris as World War I's prize criminal. Although Lea had no orders to make this attempt, he was a well-placed, old-money white southerner used to taking matters into his own hands. He had raised the 114th himself when war was declared by the United States in 1917, and he had led the unit with distinction during the worst fighting in America's major battle—the Meuse-Argonne offensive. When the armistice process began, Lea learned that the German emperor had absconded to Holland, and, as the colonel saw it, this attempt to flee was shameless. Lea believed that the kaiser had headed a militarist system in an atrocious war and now, in defeat, was trying to escape the consequences of his acts. As Lea later said, “the American soldier in his heart demanded punishment of the Kaiser for his crime against civilization.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the odds, the adventurers came closer to succeeding than one might presume. When the war ended, Lea's unit was stationed close to Holland, and through fortuitous local contacts the colonel learned of the kaiser's location. He quickly recruited a few volunteers from his unit, procured two automobiles, and made the try. His party actually made it

<sup>1</sup>Luke Lea, “The Kaiser Story,” 11 (quotation), Luke Lea Papers (Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tenn.; hereinafter cited as TSLA). As the TSLA collection of Lea's papers is vast and can be accessed only in microfilm (16 reels; TSLA microfilm accession #1541), hereinafter I will make citations to these documents using reel and frame numbers. For an edited and abridged version of “The Kaiser Story,” see William T. Alderson, ed., “The Attempt to Capture the Kaiser,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 20 (September 1961), 222–61. Newspaper articles turned this event into various forms of comedy. See T. H. Alexander, “They Tried to Capture the Kaiser—and Brought Back an Ash Tray,” *Saturday Evening Post*, October 23, 1937, pp. 5–7, 84–86, 88–89. The incident was reported as early as April 1919 in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*; see the typescripts of news releases in Lea Papers, reel 10, frame 002456.

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to the estate where Wilhelm was staying. However, because Lea wanted to persuade the emperor to go rather than kidnap him, the mission failed. The kaiser refused to surrender. Thus, the colonel and company had nothing else to do but retreat. In a superb anticlimax, U.S. Army authorities chose not to court-martial Lea, though they concluded he had committed “a most indiscreet act for any officer of the [American Expeditionary Forces (AEF)].” Officially, the incident ended here.<sup>2</sup>

Thus began the curious journey of a memory. At first glance, the raid seemed to call the result of the entire war effort into question. Lea would hardly have been so reckless or self-indulgent unless he had severe doubts about the peace, and his private war diary certainly reveals as much.<sup>3</sup> And, of course, he was not alone. Thus, the kaiser incident was actually a dark episode, or at the least an indication of dangerous loose ends left by the war. But Lea did not use the event in this way, at least not at first. Quite the contrary, he seemed to forget it entirely, burying it underneath his career as a southern Progressive politician. And he did have an important career to pursue. He had become a major figure in state politics before the war started. He had founded the Nashville *Tennessean* in the twentieth century’s first decade, using it to advance a Prohibitionist and Progressive agenda, and then was selected for the U.S. Senate in 1911. Returning to Tennessee from France after the war, he became Governor Austin L. Peay’s right-hand man. As part of his role in this capacity Lea officiated at public commemorations of what he described at this point as America’s total victory in the war. Apparently, for Lea, Jazz Age prosperity had filed off the sharp edges from the events of 1918.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The judge advocate general concluded that a court-martial would be “impractical and unwise,” as the colonel would not be found guilty of anything more than a “grave indiscretion.” See Report of the Judge Advocate General, February 12, 1919, Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002532–44 (quotation in text on 002544; first quotation in note on 002532; second quotation in note on 002544).

<sup>3</sup> Lea’s War Diary, October 13, November 11, 13, 28, and 30, and December 10, 1918, Lea Papers, reel 7, frames 000923, 000932, 000933, 000937, and 000940. He noted in these pages that the military terms of the armistice were acceptable if properly enforced. In correspondence Lea blamed Germany for the war’s barbarism, and he suggested that it would be best to dismember the country into a set of mutually destructive, quarreling states. Lea to unnamed recipient, November 15, 1918, Lea Papers, reel 10, frame 000809. Like many in the AEF, Lea was angered by the destruction that the Germans had committed as part of their retreat to the Hindenburg Line. For him, this devastation defined German barbarism. Later, he wrote vividly in “Kaiser Story” about this and other destructiveness.

<sup>4</sup> Luke Lea’s daughter, Mary Louise Lea Tidwell, wrote a biography of her father, *Luke Lea of Tennessee* (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1993). For biographical details, this book is the place to start. Tidwell also did extensive work cleaning up her father’s papers, which is quite fortunate. Among other things, Lea’s handwriting was atrocious, and it was Tidwell and others in the family who reduced much of the collection to typescript. See also David Dale Lee, “Tennessee in Turmoil: Politics in the Volunteer State, 1920–1933” (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1975); and Paul E. Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee, 1885–1920* (Knoxville, 1965).

However, the memory journey took a turn. The kaiser story suddenly became important when Lea's personal and political life collapsed. During his time as Peay's assistant, Lea earned the reputation of being a boss, and his enemies got their moment at the end of the 1920s to topple him. Then, during the Depression, he endured a prison term, because he was charged and convicted of bank fraud (he was later pardoned).<sup>5</sup> Like the country itself, he fell a long way after the high of the 1920s. It was at this juncture that Lea turned his mind back to his odd moment in history, writing while in prison a long narrative of the kaiser event. Titled "The Kaiser Story," the tale seemed to marry Lea's own collapse to the unraveling global order, tracing the world's current troubles to the unwillingness to hold the kaiser accountable for his violation of civilization. As Lea told it now, in the mid-1930s, because the emperor had cheated the hangman the world had every reason to laugh at the standards that America had supposedly gone to war to protect. According to the former colonel, the current slide into global disaster had been set in motion by what did not happen at the end of the war.<sup>6</sup>

For the historian looking back, the question becomes what to make of this change in the narrative. To be sure, we could consign the turn in Lea's recollections to the disillusionment and isolationism of the Depression. The former colonel was hardly the only American veteran to express such alienation during this period. But Lea's shifting thoughts reveal something else, because the former colonel did not use his kaiser narrative to descend into useless cynicism.<sup>7</sup> Quite the contrary, his

<sup>5</sup> Tidwell, *Luke Lea of Tennessee*, 228–29, 254. Lea was pardoned on June 15, 1937, fourteen months after he was paroled. *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>6</sup> Lea, "Kaiser Story." According to an introductory typescript (composed by his secretary?), Lea wrote the narrative in 1935. See also Alderson, ed., "Attempt to Capture the Kaiser," 222–23.

<sup>7</sup> The most spectacular example of such a cynical person would be Smedley Darlington Butler, two-time winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, who wrote *War Is a Racket* (New York, 1935) to condemn American war-making as economic colonialism. However, Butler was a marine, and he was reacting not to World War I but to the U.S. Marine Corps's Latin American incursions. As it happens, the literature on American World War I memory has within the last fifteen years all but dispatched the disillusionment thesis. It had been constructed originally by privileging Lost Generation literary figures who had their particular axes to grind. Scholars now look beyond the Ernest Hemingways and F. Scott Fitzgeralds and find a far more complex picture of American war memory. Steven Trout, for example, sees doughboy remembrance as ambiguous and fragmented but hardly disillusioned. Both he and Jonathan H. Ebel describe the persistence of a wartime idealism, but, judging by the American Legion, this idealism came in the form of a muscular Christianity rather than Wilsonian internationalism. Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919–1941* (Tuscaloosa, 2010); Steven Trout, *Memorial Fictions: Willa Cather and the First World War* (Lincoln, Neb., 2002), 1–66; Jonathan H. Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton, 2010), 168–91. See also Edward A. Gutierrez, *Doughboys on the Great War: How American Soldiers Viewed Their Military Experience* (Lawrence, Kans., 2014). On the literary establishment see Keith Gandal, *The Gun and the Pen: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and the Fiction of Mobilization* (New York, 2008).

reworked war memory marked a personal rebirth. After his release from prison, Lea drew on his political experience to establish himself in public relations and lobbying, using this platform to make one social reform proposal after another. He became an energetic advocate once again. For Lea, “The Kaiser Story” represented a creative juncture, not a drift into self-pity.

Significantly, Lea was by no means alone in turning such soured recollection into productive energy. His colleagues in the Tennessee Department of the American Legion (which Lea had helped found) changed shape as well. During the 1920s the organization had labored to commemorate the war and aid disabled comrades. As with Lea, the Depression turned its members’ moods ugly, even radical. Yet here, too, this shift spawned the positive imagination of reform, and not mere anger. In other words, for Lea and his Tennessee comrades in the American Legion, World War I memory was fertile ground. It was both a sacred past and a usable one. Stated more largely, Lea and his friends seem to have been part of the dynamic World War I veterans’ movement that Jennifer D. Keene has described. In her view, doughboys saw their cause and memory as both distinctive and worthy, pushing this experience, eventually, into advocacy for the GI Bill of 1944. Lea and his Tennessee compatriots might well have been mirroring this activism.<sup>8</sup>

But for purposes of this essay the critical fact is that Lea and the Legionnaires were white southerners, for their apparent ability to construct a usable past raises important questions about the evolution of the twentieth-century South. For the last several years, many scholars of the region have been occupied with the memory of another war—the

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, 2001). Keene argues that conscription created a very new relationship between the nation and the soldier-veteran. Having been plucked from society by what was now an all-powerful warfare state, the doughboys demanded that this state owed them a repayment for their submission to the draft. They were entitled to benefits and consideration by virtue of their sacrifice of time, body, and self that they had been compelled to provide. In Keene’s analysis, this sensibility pushed veterans to advocate the Bonus in the early 1920s and sustained their thinking up through the drafting of the GI Bill of 1944. Without disagreeing with Keene’s argument that veterans saw themselves as an entitled class, I stress that their thinking necessarily had broader implications. Keene herself discusses how the veterans’ demands seemed less exceptional when the New Deal seemed to generalize government intervention in the economy. Particularly for Lea, who, after all, began as a Progressive, it would have been impossible to separate the special demands of veterans from the issue of how such demands fit within the larger social order. Keene argues that the GI Bill was part of the construction of an American middle-class world. On the American Legion, the prime custodian of the doughboys’ memory and political agenda, see Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*, 42–106; William Pencak, *For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919–1941* (Boston, 1989); and Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History, 1919–1989* (New York, 1990). On Lea’s connection to the organization, see Cromwell Tidwell, “Luke Lea and the American Legion,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 28 (Spring 1969), 70–83.

Confederate one. Most important, as Caroline E. Janney has established, the flame of the Lost Cause burned brightly well into the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC)—the self-appointed custodians of the flame—refused to forget or forgive. But we also know from Janney’s work and others that the Daughters’ insistent separatism created problems. The UDC merged virulent racism with gender politics (the asserted moral privilege of white elite women), wrapping both in a studied hatred of the North’s Civil War legacy.<sup>10</sup> Many white southerners found this combination to be both dated and extreme, because it stood in stark contrast to the region’s effort to join the twentieth century. As is well known, major figures of the Southern Literary Renaissance despised the UDC for just this reason.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, any modernist in the region would be annoyed by such things as pointless assaults on Abraham Lincoln, in which certain UDC members indulged. As Francesca Morgan suggests, the UDC’s

<sup>9</sup> David W. Blight has argued that the culture of Civil War memory helped embed segregation in America. In his view, the need for reunion and sectional reconciliation overcame any lingering need to sustain the war’s emancipatory purpose; structural racism’s triumph was thereby assisted. Since Blight’s work appeared, a number of historians have demonstrated that veterans and heritage groups were wary if not downright hostile to reconciliation. Janney’s work represents the culmination of this critique, and her 2013 book stands as the new gold standard on the subject of Civil War memory and the lack of reconciliation. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> On the sectionalism and gendered racism of the UDC, see Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, Fla., 2003); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 12–54; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South, 1880–1920,” in Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, eds., *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton, 2000), 115–39; Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville, 2003); Caroline E. Janney, “Written in Stone: Gender, Race, and the Heyward Shepherd Memorial,” *Civil War History*, 52 (June 2006), 117–41; Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill, 2005), 27–37; and Sarah H. Case, “The Historical Ideology of Mildred Lewis Rutherford: A Confederate Historian’s New South Creed,” *Journal of Southern History*, 68 (August 2002), 599–628. To be sure, members of the UDC saw themselves as promoters of a gendered version of Progressivism—as Case and Cox discuss—and the organization established a record of patriotism during World War I. However, as Janney asserts, incidents like Mildred Lewis Rutherford’s attack on Abraham Lincoln (during the construction and dedication of the Lincoln Memorial) kept the flame of sectional grievance—along with gender and race privilege—burning well into the 1930s. See Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 290–95; and Caroline E. Janney, “War over a Shrine of Peace: The Appomattox Peace Monument and the Retreat from Reconciliation,” *Journal of Southern History*, 77 (February 2011), 91–120.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Joseph Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919–1945* (Chapel Hill, 1982). Even Margaret Mitchell was read at the time as an author who turned southern separatism back into the national, twentieth-century mainstream. After all, *Gone with the Wind*’s Scarlett O’Hara abandoned the languid Old South after the war in order to adapt herself to modern industrial energy. Sarah E. Gardner, *Blood and Irony: Southern White Women’s Narratives of the Civil War, 1861–1937* (Chapel Hill, 2004), 234–50.

anti-reconciliationist vision of history came at a price, for one can question just how usable a past it was for a region trying to enter fully the industrial world.<sup>12</sup>

A look at the South's memory of World War I might assist in evaluating this anachronism. After all, those moved by President Woodrow Wilson's crusade had to be unabashedly nationalist. Lea certainly minced no words. At the 1927 dedication of a new commemorative monument in Nashville, he argued that America had won the war.<sup>13</sup> A short time later he proposed constructing a memorial to Tennessee's three presidents.<sup>14</sup> This was hardly acidic sectionalism. Thus, if one was in the market, Tennessee's participation in the first world war certainly provided an alternative to Confederate heritage mongering. And the commemorative places and the organized group dynamics were there to be used. The state completed the massive War Memorial Building in downtown Nashville in 1925, while the Tennessee Legion and Auxiliary created posts and units all over the state, connecting official memory to living veterans from the early 1920s onward. Beyond the famous example of Tennessean war hero Alvin York, the state produced numerous reminders of World War I.

But no straightforward contest of war memories ever ensued. Indeed, the two conflicts—the Civil War and World War I—were often discussed together. It was the UDC's bedrock of gender politics that proved

<sup>12</sup> Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 290–92; Janney, “War over a Shrine of Peace”; Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, 131–46. Observe the risk in such an assault, for Lincoln's image was revived in the 1930s. Suddenly, Lincoln's memory was used to support the New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt's activism, and resistance to global tyranny. Lincoln was even enlisted (by some) in the cause of weakening segregation. Nina Silber, “Abraham Lincoln and the Political Culture of New Deal America,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 5 (September 2015), 348–71. Similarly, after 1920 the city of Charleston, South Carolina, tried to revive its economy through tourism that marketed an atmosphere of eighteenth-century civilization to appeal to the nation's “old-stock Americans.” As the “self-conscious commercialization of the southern past,” it was not something that lent itself to the belligerent politicization of Confederate heritage. Brundage, *Southern Past*, 183–227 (first quotation in note on 208; second quotation in note on 184). See also John A. Simpson, *Edith D. Pope and Her Nashville Friends: Guardians of the Lost Cause in the Confederate Veteran* (Knoxville, 2003); and Kim E. Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus, Ohio, 2001), 112–32.

<sup>13</sup> “Col. Lea Praises Valor of America at Civic Luncheon,” *Nashville Tennessean*, November 12, 1927, sec. 1, p. 1, sec. 2, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Lea was always the urban Progressive, looking for ways to blend commercialized city space with monumental and reflective political space. In 1928 he proposed that the federal government should build a memorial (in Nashville) to Tennessee's three presidents. In defending the idea to the U.S. Senate Library Committee, he stated that every state should have a monument to the presidency: “It is a very great thing, I think, for a man to achieve that office.” U.S. Senate, Committee on the Library, 70 Cong., 1 Sess., *Establishment of a Presidents' Plaza, Nashville, Tenn.: Hearing . . . on S.3171, March 10, 1928* (Washington, D.C., 1928), 2 (quotations in note); also in Lea Papers, reel 12, frames 001551–57.



vulnerable over time.<sup>15</sup> Lea used the UDC's vision to sustain his Wilsonianism at first. He tied the First World War to Civil War memory expressly, in order to utilize the moral privilege of white women. As Lea stated at the time, the Confederate past gave historical legitimacy to this gendered moral order. And he was not simply being reflexive. But this position did not survive the 1920s. By the time of the Depression—while the UDC was maintaining its hard line—Lea and his American Legion compatriots had changed their tune. Specifically, the fundamental cause became not white women, but the need to democratize the duties of citizenship and create an equitable social compact that was worth defending in global war. Lea's world war now had a new meaning. As part of the reworking, the need for white female privilege disappeared, and so the UDC's sacred trust could be safely discarded. Confederate memory remained, without question, but the UDC version now seemed quaint. Said another way, for Lea and the American Legion, the new World War I memory was better adapted to the legacy of 1919 than was the worldview of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Lea did not start out to be a global warrior. Rather, he began his public life in the domestic ferment of the Prohibition movement—he founded the Nashville *Tennessean* as a temperance paper—and he combined this advocacy with an insistent southern Progressivism, promoting the usual agenda of roads, public education, and antimonopoly efforts. His star rose quickly, in part because he had talent, but also because he had inherited old Tennessee money and family name and operated out of the ever-busy New South city of Nashville. In 1911 he translated this success into selection to the U.S. Senate. Wilson's election followed the next year, and so Lea seemed perfectly situated to advance his agenda. Then the July Crisis of the summer of 1914 and the resultant war forced Lea and his country down a new path.<sup>16</sup>

Lea navigated this path by using gender politics as filtered through the Confederate past, discussing both through an image of what he called Christian civilization. In doing so he continued a line of argument that he and others had developed during his reform advocacy—of Prohibition in particular. Essentially, Lea was a spokesman for what scholars like

<sup>15</sup> Francesca Morgan finds a decided split during the 1920s between the UDC and other “conservative” women's groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). While the DAR became part of a modern and vibrant conservative Right based on militant and masculinist patriotism, the UDC would not abandon its devotion to woman's special cultural authority or its insistence on Anglo-Saxonism. Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, 131–46.

<sup>16</sup> Tidwell, *Luke Lea of Tennessee*; Leonard Schlup, “Pugnacious Progressive: Senator Luke Lea as a Political Leader from Tennessee in the Wilson Era,” *International Review of History and Political Science*, 21 (November 1984), 52–66; Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*.

Gaines M. Foster and Alison M. Parker have described as a movement for “moral reconstruction”: a crusade that sought to use the presumed moral superiority of racially privileged women to construct a nation of pure individual character.<sup>17</sup> For purposes of this essay, the important point is that Lea blended the UDC’s gendered Lost Cause with this Christian reform vision and then used the combination to discuss the question of global war. He deployed southern history and Protestant sanctity against the tragedy of 1914. As it happened, Lea used this ideology to oppose U.S. intervention in the conflict early on, but he changed his mind in the spring of 1917. Throughout, however, he remained consistent to his sacred cause of a gender-based Christian civilization.

Because he was an important public figure, Lea had the opportunity to lay out this cause in detail. He started out as a noninterventionist and had to say as much early on. His political foes manipulated the election machinery to force an early primary, in November 1915. In hopes of retaining his Senate seat, he thus had to hit the campaign trail during the height of the *Lusitania* crisis.<sup>18</sup> Fortunately, two of his manuscript speeches survive from that year: one delivered at a Confederate monument unveiling; the other presented to the graduating class of the University of the South at Sewanee (Lea’s alma mater). For the purposes of analysis, this juxtaposition of occasions is quite fortunate. Necessarily, Lea referenced for his first audience the war of the 1860s, while to the Sewanee graduates he discussed where modern life was headed. He then wrapped each of these obligatory topics into his current support for neutrality.

As Lea represented matters at this moment, war was the evil that imperiled a sacred but fragile Christian world order. He told the college

<sup>17</sup> Gaines M. Foster, *Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Alison M. Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873–1933* (Urbana, 1997). See also Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South”; Alison M. Parker, “‘Hearts Uplifted and Minds Refreshed’: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the Production of Pure Culture in the United States, 1880–1930,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 11 (Summer 1999), 135–58; Alison M. Parker, *Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-Century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State* (DeKalb, Ill., 2010), esp. chap. 4; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago, 1995); and Susan J. Pearson, “A New Birth of Regulation: The State of the State after the Civil War,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 5 (September 2015), 422–39.

<sup>18</sup> On Lea’s positions in the Senate campaign, see, for example, “Sen. Lea Opens His Campaign,” *Nashville Tennessean and American*, September 12, 1915, pp. 1A, 8A, 9A; and “Progressive Policies of Sen. Lea,” *Nashville Tennessean and American*, May 7, 1915, p. 6; various clippings can also be found in Lea Papers, reel 13, frames 001400–1415. As Lea was appointed to the Senate in 1911, the 1915 campaign was his first for election. He lost to Kenneth D. McKellar, who held the seat thereafter for several decades.



graduates that Europe's suicide threatened to destroy a world "lighted by Him who lived the life of 'peace on earth, good will to men.'"<sup>19</sup> At the Confederate monument unveiling, the senator opened by stating that war has "no place in a civilization whose foundation stone is the life of Christ." He then quickly pulled southern history into the argument. He insisted that the war of the 1860s was important not for its military glory but for its suffering, particularly the suffering of women. He asked his audience to ponder the endless number of diseased and destitute widows, along with the orphaned babes. Imagine, he said, the "shadows of death about the pale face of the wife of the [absent] soldier boy as she became the mother of his first born." Loneliness was her "only comrade" and "agony her only nurse." The white South's tragic experience in the 1860s demonstrated that the region (and nation) must now prove loyal to a civilization in Christ that was above war. Now, as then, Lea insisted, the region should "fight for the womanhood of the South," but to prevent the battle rather than engage in it.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in making the case for neutrality Lea merged the Confederate past and sacred white womanhood. And the senator was by no means alone in this approach. After all, in the film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), D. W. Griffith connected the racialized South, gender sanctity, civilization, and the cause of Christian peace in exactly the same way. Moreover, President Wilson agreed with these sentiments.<sup>21</sup>

But nonintervention was not Lea's fundamental cause. The larger matter was Christian civilization itself and the sacred white women who stood at its center. He made this argument central to both speeches. He told his hearers at the Confederate monument that southern white women—not the glorious heroes of the thin gray line—were the important story of the war of the 1860s. Women were critical, he said, because they were the heroic but sobering victims of history. Lea imagined two paintings of southern courage: one detailing the "gallant regiment, clad in ragged and tattered gray, marching up the hill of death"; the other showing only the "lonely vine-clad cottage," tattered and

<sup>19</sup> "Responsibilities of Citizenship," June 15, 1915, Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002103–29 (quotation on 002129). On his arrival in the Senate Lea was invited to join an International Peace Forum, which, among other things, sought to replace war with compulsory arbitration. Lea heartily supported the idea. International Peace Forum invitation, May 10, 1911, Lea Papers, reel 13, frames 000504–5.

<sup>20</sup> "Unveiling of a Civil War Monument," 1915, Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002146–52 (quotations on 002150–51). See also "Lea and Garrett Make Addresses at Unveiling," *Nashville Tennessean and American*, June 8, 1915, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation: A History of "the Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (New York, 2007). Wilson's attitudes are well known. See John Milton Cooper Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York, 2009), 270–73.

disheveled in its own way, because the “heavy hand of war had lifted the hand of love from the latch string.” Lea pulled no punches. The courage of these women-victims made “the courage of war appear like cowardice.” A woman “dies a double death” in war, Lea insisted, “one in the life she gives to the world, and another in the life the world gives her.”<sup>22</sup>

In the address to the college graduates, Lea launched into a discussion of modern living. But here, too, history as made by men endangered women. In this case, the difficulty was woman’s special sphere: the house and the family time within. Lea contrasted what he described as the all-encompassing domain of the household of the past with the current isolated home of the modern urban world. The latter was “but a place to rest between the earlier and later hours of the morning, when all other places are closed.” Meals might be served here, he continued, but only if the clubs were too far away. In this current, busy city life, the house was but a “dressing room attached on the line of the traction car.”<sup>23</sup>

On both of these oratorical occasions the real drama was less war than a Christian womanhood that was both morally central and imperiled. Lea said it directly: “No nation can be greater or stronger or better than its women, who are the center of the family, are pure and true and noble.” He told the college graduates that it was the up-and-coming generation’s task to be vigilant “against every assault that may be made against [our nation’s] womanhood, so that the women of tomorrow may be as pure, and as good as our mothers of yesterday.” If such protection were afforded, women could remain the “source of all inspiration which leads to higher ideals and nobler lives.”<sup>24</sup> Of course, nothing in this imagery marked Lea as original. Rather, the point is that he viewed the global conflict through the lens of gender privilege, fusing the UDC’s version of the Confederate past with the “moral reconstruction” crusade.

<sup>22</sup> “Unveiling of a Civil War Monument,” Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002149–50. Francesca Morgan observes that conservative women’s groups like the DAR shifted from pacifism to preparedness during the neutrality crisis, and that the UDC was the last major group to do so. In short, Lea’s linkage of Christian womanhood and antiwar sentiment in 1915 would not survive the next year. After the war, pacifism meant something quite different from what Lea was referencing. Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, 101–17. See also Frances H. Early, *A World Without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1997); and Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory,” 131–33.

<sup>23</sup> “Responsibilities of Citizenship,” Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002106–7. Of course, Lea was no agrarian. He created Nashville’s Belle Meade suburban development, promoted the city’s first parking garage (during the 1920s), and, with Governor Peay, helped establish what became Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Lea’s criticism of the traction car belied the fact that he was one of the foremost promoters of modern urban living in the state. See, for example, documents pertaining to the “Town and Country Club,” Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000449–57.

<sup>24</sup> “Responsibilities of Citizenship,” Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002107–8.

It should be noted that Lea made no direct appeals to race as he worked through his neutrality advocacy. However, no one acquainted with the UDC's hysterical support of segregation and lynching during this period could doubt that Lea upheld the racist segment of the gender-based structure he imaged so vividly, and, in fact, the senator was hardly above such baiting. His newspaper, the *Tennessean*, employed the strategy as part of its Prohibition cause. On one occasion the sheet described a popular gin that was labeled provocatively with a scantily clad white female. "This gin, with its label, has made more black rape fiends, and has procured the outrage of more white women in the south, than all other agencies combined." Then, in an ultimate damning of the liquor interests, the paper charged that the gin was "sold with the promise that it will bring white virtue into the black brute's power."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, up through the spring of 1917 Lea developed a nonintervention stance that focused on defending a gender-stratified civilization. As part of his effort, the UDC's version of a Confederate past proved quite useful. As Lea put it, the "South yesterday and today is the same, because the womanhood which gave it birth and nurtured it . . . [is] as unchanging . . . as the laws of God."<sup>26</sup> When the United States entered the war in 1917, nothing about this basic formula needed to change. It was simply the case that the German submarine campaign now required U.S. intervention. War would defend this woman-centered civilization; peace was no longer effective. There was nothing exceptional in this stance. The other European combatants had since 1914 used images of violated womanhood to sanctify industrialized violence. As was made clear by the revitalized images of the original *Lusitania* sinking, the doughboy war would, in part, be made a crusade to avenge martyred women of privilege.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> H. M. Du Bose, "The Model Saloon License League," Nashville *Tennessean*, June 14, 1908, p. 4. See also Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*, 148.

<sup>26</sup> "Unveiling of a Civil War Monument," Lea Papers, reel 10, frame 002146.

<sup>27</sup> I refer, of course, to the famous poster *Enlist*. It portrayed a woman and her child, dressed in white, submerged beneath the waves. An observer needed no other reference to the *Lusitania*. For its part, Abel Gance's critical film *J'Accuse* (1919) centered on a rape scene far more pointed than the interracial marriage scene in *The Birth of a Nation*. Of course, one need only mention the so-called rape of Belgium and the infamous execution of British nurse Edith Cavell. See Tammy M. Proctor, "La Dame Blanche: Gender and Espionage in Occupied Belgium," in Jenny Macleod and Pierre Puseigle, eds., *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Boston, 2004), 227–42; Ruth Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian': Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War," *Past and Present*, no. 141 (November 1993), 170–206; Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front* (New York, 2000), 98–132; John Home and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001), 196–204; Alison S. Fell, "Nursing the Other: The Representation of Colonial Troops in French and British First World War Nursing Memoirs," in Santanu Das, ed., *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (New York, 2011), 158–74; and Lisa M. Todd, "The Hun and the Home: Gender, Sexuality and Propaganda in First World War Europe," in Troy R. E. Paddock, ed., *World War I and Propaganda* (Boston, 2014), 137–54.

But there was more to the matter. For Lea and other white Tennesseans, there was good reason to retain the connection to sacred women and the Confederate past as the country entered industrial war. Indeed, this connection proved vital. Although it might seem that modern war-making would make such a gender-based imagery archaic, precisely the reverse was true. White Christian womanhood and the Confederate war of the 1860s were more critical to war-making than to the peace advocacy. Southern white femininity and the thin, gray line were needed now more than ever.

In part this continued reliance on the memory of the Civil War was required because the process of mobilization and the methods of industrial war were truly novel, and the nation had no genuine experience on which to draw. In this situation, the Confederate past that Lea had included in his neutrality imagery could suddenly be recast as a replay of the war of the 1860s. In this guise it became an excellent imagined tradition to use to smooth the transition to recruiting in 1917 and combat in 1918. Indeed, Lea used references to Civil War heritage at every opportunity. First, true to the demands of his gendered world, Lea related to a friend in February 1917 that if he were forced to vote for the declaration, he would immediately enlist. No true man or leader of men, he said, would cast such a vote and then refuse to go himself.<sup>28</sup> As good as his word, Lea used his connections in Washington, D.C., and Tennessee to begin raising what would become the 114th as a volunteer outfit under his command. In doing so, he defied Wilson's mobilization plan in the name of a Civil War anachronism. The federal government in 1917 began the war with conscription, in part to avoid the Civil War voluntarism that had turned the officer corps into a patronage game and the volunteer units into a hodge-podge collection of state-based formations. Lea, in short, was going backward, recreating the 1861 pattern almost exactly.<sup>29</sup> Then, to continue the historical referencing, Lea tried to raise the force as a cavalry unit. He loved horses, and so centered his recruiting on them. Join "Tennessee's only mounted regiment," he advertised. Finally, Lea even copied Civil War flag presentation ceremonies. His unit was given a send-off parade in Nashville complete with a silk banner provided by a grateful citizenry. Echoing a host of

<sup>28</sup> Luke Lea to John T. Lelleyett, February 17, 1917, Lea Papers, reel 13, frame 002675.

<sup>29</sup> See Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York, 2008), 21–54; David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York, 1980), 144–63; and John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York, 1987). Among other things, Wilson was haunted by the prospect of having Theodore Roosevelt become a volunteer again and use the resulting celebrity to reestablish his political career.

regimental colonels from the heady days of 1861, he stated, “I accept this sacred trust . . . to protect these colors that symbolize American liberty.” Going on to discuss the colors specifically, Lea noted, as one would only expect, that the white symbolized “the noble purity of our American womanhood.” Although his unit was eventually reassigned to the artillery—a rather more useful occupation in an industrial war—he had insisted on these initial Civil War–styled statements.<sup>30</sup>

Lea was by no means alone in using such historical references. Henry Clay Bate, who served in the Thirtieth Division, accepted an award after the war that the UDC created to link the South of the 1860s with the national war of 1917–1918. Bate replied with a letter of thanks, praising “those worthy women whose good deeds and patriotic precepts afforded me so much inspiration as I grew up.” The honoree then went further, noting that his unit had acquired a large group of replacements. “These untried [Southern] boys never faltered. . . . There was no hanging back. When the line halted, this group of green men was always well to the front. Except those who had fallen.” No one actually familiar with a battle zone dominated by mustard gas, machine guns, pillboxes, barbed wire, and heavy artillery would accept this echo of Civil War linear fighting: a line that halted, with the true men well to the front. Bate, however, was happy to warm the hearts of the UDC. Using exactly the same image, Austin P. Foster, the assistant state librarian, stated after the conflict that American troops had won the war, and that Tennessee soldiers “were in the forefront on their battle line.”<sup>31</sup>

Albert P. Smith, son of Tennessee’s director of conscription, referenced the all-too-usable Lost Cause in a slightly different way. While in training camp, Smith wrote to his mother, Graeme McGregor Smith—a prominent member of the UDC and a pro-education Progressive. Do not think about the “Hell of war,” he told her, but rather “the righteousness of our side.” He then went on to link the war to lynching (a practice Lea opposed): “In the South we have always revenged crimes of a like nature to the crimes of the German soldiers either by law or mob. In this case the violators are more powerful than the negro brutes of the South, so the

<sup>30</sup> Reese Amis, *History of the 114th Field Artillery* (Nashville, 1920), 9–16 (first quotation on 12; second quotation on 15; third quotation on 16). Regarding the importance of flag presentation ceremonies during Civil War recruiting, see Gerald J. Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861–1862* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 1–34.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Clay Bate to the William B. Bate Chapter of the UDC, 1928 (first and second quotations), in Scrapbook, 1927–1928, Series 13: Records of the General William B. Bate Chapter, Records of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Tennessee Division (TSLA); Austin P. Foster, “Nashville’s Parthenon First Considered; But Present Plan Finally Adopted,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, September 15, 1925, sec. 1 (third quotation).

mob is out of the question . . . . [Rather,] the pick of the country's best is needed." In this same letter Smith stated that the victors would put in place a global supreme court to govern international relations, but he quickly turned this revolutionary cause back to the past. "I am where your Father was in '61," he insisted. Smith then hit the true central point. As he wrote in another letter, he told his mother that he was fighting for women. "All women are sacred beings," he said. They are "the Zenith of God's handiwork . . . . Why should we mere men hesitate to give our lives for these jewels."<sup>32</sup>

It should be noted here that there was nothing particularly southern about creating usable anachronism in order to try and inject some form of old-fashioned honor into this industrial war. After the failure of the Schlieffen Plan in the fall of 1914, the combatant nations resorted to new and ever more destructive forms of war-making. By 1915 the rifle and bayonet were being supplanted by Zeppelin raids, submarines, poison gas, flamethrowers, and a host of other terrifying innovations. And yet the major participants labored to contain this mass-produced destruction within images and forms that were deliberately archaic. Thus, a conflict that featured tanks and strategic bombing was credibly represented by images of St. George and the Dragon, Joan of Arc, the appearance of the Virgin at Fatima (and Mons), and Germanic nail figures. What Stefan Goebel identifies as neo-medievalism was a common impulse both during the war and in the immediate aftermath. If the conflict produced Dadaism, it also inspired various premodern and antimodern cultural references.<sup>33</sup>

But the imagery of sacred womanhood and the Confederate past was necessary for something deeper than cultural reassurance about industrial war-making. Whether they were modernized states or creaking empires, all the major participant nations encountered a devilish

<sup>32</sup> Albert P. Smith to his mother, April 24, 1918 (first through fourth quotations), and November 3, 1918 (fifth and sixth quotations), Folder 8, Box 3, Rutledge Smith and Graeme McGregor Smith Papers (TSLA), microfilm, reel 2. On this romanticized view of militarized gender worship during the Civil War itself, see Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> World War I historians have long since rejected Paul Fussell's contention that the events of 1914 replaced the Victorian vision of the world with an ironic, modernist, and cynical culture. Jay Winter began the process of critiquing Fussell, arguing that traditional themes and images proved more than useful and credible as forms of commemoration after 1919. Many scholars now observe that usable traditionalism was part of the war itself. See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York, 1975); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York, 1995), esp. 1–10, 54–77; Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940* (New York, 2007), 1–27; Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (New York, 2014), 63–188; Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I* (New York, 2014), 210–26; and Ebel, *Faith in the Fight*, chap. 2.



paradox. Specifically, the war demanded a total mobilization of all resources, human and physical. The conflict was voracious, requiring the states to replace huge casualties, accelerate war industries, and counteract agricultural shortages. The demand for more of everything only grew—for more people particularly. In response, the combatant nations were always recruiting, and in necessarily novel ways. But as the war made it necessary to be more demanding, it brought about new forms and degrees of coercion. Thus, the governments alienated and marginalized people even as they tried to attract them. To make matters worse, the amplified compulsion inspired among many in each of the combatant countries the desire to turn the war into a purification campaign, purging the variously unworthy or alien. As a result, if the war prodded the combatant nations to expand the social contract, it also worked to coerce and exclude. *Citizenship*, *subjecthood*, and *alien* were terms repeatedly redefined.<sup>34</sup> The original national imagined communities of 1914 were completely unequal to this grinding between millstones. By 1915 the meaning of belonging to the state was evolving rapidly and in contradictory ways.

As Christopher Capozzola has detailed, this paradox hit the United States hard. The nation began its war with conscription. This was to be a “selective service”: a choosing among the eligible men of the country, all of whom, it was said, had already volunteered enthusiastically simply by virtue of the congressional vote declaring war. In any scenario this was a dangerous fantasy to cultivate, but then, to amplify the problem, conscription hit the country’s ever-so-loosely organized society. For decades the national imagined community of the United States had been counterpointed by immigrants, with their persistent languages and customs, and by other groups who stood outside the mainstream. The country was far more culturally decentralized than any presidential election ritual would suggest, precisely what groups like the Prohibitionists had fumed about. Then suddenly, in 1917, it became the purest patriotism to insist that the various segments of the population

<sup>34</sup> For a general discussion of this process, see David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York, 2004). For German, British, and Russian approaches, see Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 375–415; Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London, 2000); Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb, Ill., 2003), esp. 201–8; and Joshua A. Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (New York, 2014). American scholarship has for some time associated World War I and state building, though in the more political-institutional sense. See Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (New York, 1991); and Marc Allen Eisner, *From Warfare State to Welfare State: World War I, Compensatory State Building, and the Limits of the Modern Order* (University Park, Pa., 2000), 19–85.

prove their “100 percent Americanism.” As Capozzola describes, the result was a vicious ethnic civil war where crude, predatory vigilantes joined with would-be architects of a police state to search out aliens, radicals, and so-called slackers.<sup>35</sup>

Tennessee had its own troubles along these lines. In addition to the enormous racial divide, the state had its city immigrant machines, in Memphis in particular. Moreover, the industrial New South had opened a large split between rural and urban areas that politicians like Lea had been working to close. Finally, as the former senator could readily attest, the long and brutal state Prohibition movement had exposed deep divisions that passage of a state statute in 1909 had done little to resolve. However much Lea might have wanted to compress Tennessee and the industrializing South into a single moral world where dutiful white men followed the inspiring character of proper, Christian white women, the real society was far more diverse and conflicted. The sudden demand for 100 percent Americanism—a slogan that Lea supported all the rest of his life—only aggravated the problem.<sup>36</sup>

Tennessee’s answer to this difficulty was to allow the state’s privileged classes to model the newly required Americanism by exhibiting a very public and unhesitating loyalty. These privileged would give *100 percent* a vivid and visible meaning. Specifically, they cheerfully gave maximum effort without doubt or the need for coercion. For its part, the 114th was described in exactly this way. The regiment’s historian recorded that because the unit was composed of volunteers, it had been “possible to maintain the highest standards and get the very best men.” These individuals were “picked,” the author continued, “many of them being college students or graduates.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 3–54. In such an atmosphere it would hardly be an accident that the coerced loyalty to the war against Germany translated readily into what Lisa McGirr describes as the war against alcohol. Lisa McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State* (New York, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> For examples of Lea’s lifelong support for 100 percent Americanism, see typescript of Lea’s address to his troops, July 4, 1918, Lea Papers, reel 10, frame 001739; and “Foundation for Veterans,” Lea Papers, reel 14, frame 000663. Jeanette Keith has explored the distinct vision that rural southerners, black and white, had of World War I. There was considerable resistance to the draft and intervention among rural southerners, which was voiced by their representatives in Congress. Although race complicated this matter, Keith sees economic dissent—particularly the legacy of Populism—as the central issue. In Tennessee this rural-urban split persisted well into the 1920s. See Jeanette Keith, “The Politics of Southern Draft Resistance, 1917–1918: Class, Race, and Conscription in the Rural South,” *Journal of American History*, 87 (March 2001), 1335–61; Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, 2004); and Jeanette Keith, *Country People in the New South: Tennessee’s Upper Cumberland* (Chapel Hill, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Amis, *History of the 114th Field Artillery*, 11.

But as Lea well knew, privileged white women were far better adapted than men to the task of theatricalizing pure, unproblematic devotion. According to the long-cultivated moral reconstruction paradigm, proper white women were loyal to the good by virtue of their biological nature. Inherently pure, women negated the ugly contradiction of having to coerce loyalty in a controversial war. For proper women, sacrificial devotion was simply moral instinct. Moreover, as a bonus, such privileged women could readily surrender to the state and yet, at the same time, seize cultural, moral, and institutional leadership. Since the 1870s at least, womanly submission conveyed the right to organize power and use it. By gendered definition and by virtue of their dignified being, women could act “without stint or limit,” as President Wilson requested of the war effort.<sup>38</sup>

While Colonel Lea was away in France, Davidson County, Tennessee, women theatricalized the war in exactly this way. A few years after the armistice, the clubwomen of the Nashville region put together a volume detailing their organized voluntary activities from 1914 to 1919. By doing so they intended to display how their empowered virtue had produced a purified American way of war. These women insisted that their efforts represented the “true spirit” of the nation. The volume’s compilers put it bluntly. It was important, they said, to reveal “the records of patriotic services rendered voluntarily by the women of Davidson County in the greatest war that has ever been staged in history.” Appropriately, the book was thick, detailing names and activities and reproducing photographs of the various women’s organizations in the area—including the United Daughters of the

<sup>38</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Force to the Utmost,” speech at the opening of the Third Liberty Loan Campaign, April 6, 1918, online via Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65406>. Much of the literature on American women in World War I focuses on the difficulties involved in turning long-cultivated, feminist, turn-of-the-twentieth-century pacifism toward accepting a masculinist war, including the gender-bending of women eager to put on the uniform, use weapons, and fight. Moreover, scholars focus on whether the war promoted an expansion of citizenship rights and equality, as many women demanded. The conclusion of this literature is that women gained less from suffrage and the wartime service crusade than one might expect. See Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana, 2008), 39–76; Erika A. Kuhlman, *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate over War, 1895–1919* (Westport, Conn., 1997); Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam’s Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917–1919* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1999), 137–74; and Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood*. In her discussion of conservative women’s organizations, Francesca Morgan argues that groups like the DAR and the UDC accepted a male-led patriotism and “cultural authority” as part of the war, but merged it with their longtime devotion to woman’s cultural and moral superiority. I would blend Morgan’s findings with Capozzola’s, and note that altered gender imagery involved more than masculinization but was vital in a war where loyalty now had radically new definitions and tensions. Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*, 101–17 (quotation in note on 110).

Confederacy—who mobilized to help in the war. The volume revealed a meticulously organized body of subgroups and coordinating committees. Thus laid out, the book was intended to display how true Americans had gone to war.<sup>39</sup>

To be sure, the record of women's activities contained the usual home-front occupations. Knitting woolen goods—socks, comforters, sweaters, and the like—to warm “our soldiers and those of our Allies who suffer in the frozen trenches” was undertaken by several women's groups. Indeed, the volume's compilers intended to provide a traditional flavor here, for they made the effort to demonstrate that older, experienced knitters (from earlier wars) were recruited along with younger ones. There was even a picture featuring the oldest woman and youngest girl.<sup>40</sup>

But this commemorative volume was about the complete war, not just domesticity. It is evident that the compilers wanted to use their recording of women's work to display what a properly organized war conducted by a loyal and enthusiastic population looked like. Davidson County women intended to show the world what “100 percent American” war-making truly meant. Thus the compilers did not detail activities so much as celebrate the attitudes, values, and verve of the women. Their book did not catalog things done so much as it recorded drive, intelligence, will, and sacrifice. In this regard, the compilers were comprehensive, including in the volume these fundamental elements: unhesitating and complete sacrifice (risk of death included); industrial and managerial efficiency; exacting military discipline parallel to soldiering; and a social maternalism designed to protect the morals of young men. Together these elements demonstrated that Davidson County women represented American war democracy at work.

To begin with managerialism, the compilers were hardly shy about explaining woman's expert organizational ability. For example, they observed that the canteen committee (which ran the service accommodating soldiers passing through Nashville on troop trains) kept precise records. During one six-month period the committee distributed exactly “54,449 smokes, 16,517 sticks of candy, 35,920 postcards, . . . [and] 5,993 sheets of paper with envelopes,” among other things. In like spirit, the volume recorded that the so-called Department of Woman's Work labored directly under the management of national American Red

<sup>39</sup>Rose Long Gilmore, *Davidson County Women in the World War, 1914–1919* (Nashville, 1923), 4–5 (quotations on 5).

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 202–20 (quotation on 202; photograph on 209).

Cross headquarters; “it was found . . . that there was danger of over-production of some articles and not enough of others, and also that only limited transportation could be secured.” All production was thus placed under an “allotment plan.” Quotas having been determined, “the high standard of work . . . was maintained at all times.” Similarly, the volume’s authors noted that the hospital garments department worked with buttonhole machines, using volunteers “who worked in teams according to factory methods . . . . When assembled these workrooms took on the appearance of a large factory.” For its part, the Centennial Club—an old Nashville women’s organization—operated at a more refined level of management, because the compilers reported that its members had “put at the disposal of their country the training of group action and collective intellectual effort which had hitherto been devoted to the improvement of local conditions and the enjoyment of the cultural side of life.”<sup>41</sup> One cannot turn a page in this commemorative book without encountering proud and deliberately elaborate references to focused vision, organizational ability, exactness, the elimination of waste, and the ability to produce at scale. The volume is about nothing if not the gospel of efficiency.

Military discipline mattered as well. In several records one encounters a studied mimicking of the army’s chain of command as well as its system of rank. The military metaphor was everywhere in the descriptions. The volunteers identified with it. One high-level administrator “assumed her duties as if under military rules, and practically closed her home for the two years of the war period.” The director of the Department of Woman’s Work “led her ‘Regiment’ of several thousand women ably and wisely.” For their part, the canteen committee, typical of many, subdivided their workers into teams, organized under four captains and ten lieutenants. But most important in this military-style organization was the Motor Corps Department. These women were drivers liveried in quasi-military uniform, and army procedures governed their work. They were subject to “strict regulations,” and so provided “unquestioned obedience to superior officers” and displayed “the intelligent method of carrying out commands.” Thus organized, the Motor Corps made “an efficient machine for service” unsurpassed “by any other body of local war workers.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 240 (first quotation), 173–74 (second, third, and fourth quotations on 173), 192 (fifth quotation), 97 (sixth quotation).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 134 (first quotation), 173 (second quotation), 235, 253 (third through seventh quotations).

Obviously these Davidson County women were hardly shy about appropriating the men's war. But they were women as well. In addition to citing the gender bending, the volume records the more properly female expressions of war duty. For one, aid to the diseased generated a risk that both mimicked the soldier in combat and expressed an especially feminine sacrifice. Red Cross nurses who visited homes, particularly during the influenza epidemic, demonstrated "the most heroic and most self-sacrificing service." During the same epidemic, canteen workers dealing with the troop trains encountered the same dangers. They had "no thought of risk to themselves . . . but ministered to the sick, not hesitating to come in contact with various kinds of contagious diseases when the need arose."<sup>43</sup>

To this risk of disease and death Davidson County women added the role of supervising the moral habits of the soldier boys. Unlike the later GIs of World War II, the doughboys in Wilson's crusade were to represent a sober soldiery, not simply a military force. As befitted a nation adopting Prohibition as a constitutional amendment, the men were required to exhibit proper character. Nashville women were more than ready to act as moral guardians. In 1917 the Young Women's Christian Association appointed a committee "to request all women's organizations of Nashville to co-operate in creating sentiment to safeguard the morals of the soldiers" training at Camp Andrew Jackson. In like fashion, the Army Comfort League was organized "to supervise the comforts of the Tennessee soldiers" both in training camp and overseas. To this end they built a reading room for state recruits at Camp Jackson, stocking it with appropriate books and magazines, along with songbooks from the Methodist Publishing House (in Nashville). In addition, even the canteen workers would, when necessary, help "a wrongdoer to correct his fault or his sin."<sup>44</sup>

Through such rhetorically charged descriptions, the compilers of the war record of Davidson County women intended to produce a monument within book covers. The volume was to perform the same function as the later War Memorial Building, for the publication committee reported with "satisfaction" that the book "passed on to future generations a record of the role their ancestors played in the first war known in history when women were drafted into service." Such glittering prose was appropriate because these women, as they saw it, had moved back and forth across gender lines to create the model of what an entire

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 232 (first quotation), 237 (second quotation).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 94 (first quotation), 115–16 (second quotation on 115), 237–38 (third quotation).



country at war should be. These women represented far more than the home front. Of course, they were not enlisted as combat infantry (though many wished to be), but they represented all the values, talents, and expertise needed for the national crusade. As the volume's compilers recorded in reference to the Girls' Patriotic League, women—youth in this case—"had an influence similar to that of the fighting forces. The spirit of democracy was the outstanding feature of this organization, as girls of all walks of life were associated together to assist in the work of gaining world freedom." Thus was 100 percent Americanism vibrantly defined.<sup>45</sup>

And there was one more issue here. Although World War I has often been described and analyzed as a vast degeneration—a descent into the "dynamic of destruction," as Alan Kramer characterizes it—many at the time viewed it as a revolution of rising expectations, albeit one born of tragedy. Such appears to be the case with the attitudes expressed in the Davidson County volume, for its rhetoric had millennial references similar to those discussed by Jonathan H. Ebel.<sup>46</sup> Specifically, the war promised to redeem the Prohibition and Progressive movements. These causes had not been easy, for industrialization in the New South had created many conflicts. Lea, for one, had built a career by lamenting not only the evils of liquor but also the degeneracy of powerful corporations that operated only for profit.<sup>47</sup> Intervention in the world war appeared to allow Tennessee to rise above this corruption and selfishness. Davidson County women showed the way. Through their efficient sacrifice, they purified the energy of industrialization. Privileged womanhood—Confederate roots and all—merged with "factory methods," "high standards of work," and "unquestioned obedience to superior officers." Through war-making, the sanctity of white womanhood with its hallowed southern past became a gender-based foundation for a morally sound industrial future.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 (first and second quotations), 280 (third quotation).

<sup>46</sup> Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (New York, 2007); Ebel, *Faith in the Fight*. In imagining the war as a descent into a culture of destructiveness, Kramer goes beyond the older *Sonderweg* thesis, which blamed cultural and moral decline on the German Reich's presumably flawed embrace of modernization. In Kramer's estimation, groups like the Italian Futurists, among others, were critically at fault for cultivating nihilist violence. See also Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*. For the roots of this twentieth-century destructiveness on the eastern front, see Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> For Lea's stinging anticorporate Progressivism, see, in particular, his studied hatred of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. See typescript of a speech on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, n.d. [ca. 1913], Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002015–40; "National Forces in Conflict Today," n.d. [ca. 1915], Lea Papers, reel 10, frames 002042–61; "Luke Lea vs. L. & N. R. R.," *Nashville Tennessean and American*, August 9, 1913, p. 6; and "Five Speeches Made by Senator Luke Lea in West Tennessee," *Nashville Tennessean and American*, October 7, 1915, pp. 1, 2.

With the war symbolized in such expansive terms, Lea could certainly believe that the United States had won a victory. There was no reason to think about the complications. The highly organized women of Davidson County had removed the need for such concerns. Said more correctly, doubt, anger, or anxiety created by the war could be shuttled into the emerging Red Scare (in which Lea's newspaper participated to no small degree).<sup>48</sup> In terms of the military victory, gender sanctity seemed to erase all doubt, or so Colonel Lea seemed to confirm when he and the 114th returned to Nashville. The "boys" were given a parade, of course, but the organized women's groups were right there in a most visible, dramatic way. The major organizations, including the UDC, prepared tableaux of important patriotic scenes for the soldiers to view as they trooped by. Even in the welcome home parade given for the soldiers, privileged women reinforced their symbolic importance and cultural authority. Thus, when Lea rode by on horseback looking at these living statues, he may or may not have been thinking about his failed attempt to capture the kaiser, but it made no difference. Indeed, his newspaper was willing to allow the emperor to become, quite literally, a joke. At this moment, the important story was one of complete national triumph. Davidson County women in their assumed poses had literally imaged it.<sup>49</sup>

But as victory in 1918 settled into the energetic prosperity of the Jazz Age, a subtle shift occurred in this triumphalism, if one cared to notice. Although Nashville's monument building and commemoration activities during the 1920s repeated the theme of high-mindedness and sacrifice developed during the war, the Confederate past, feminine or otherwise, became less important to the narrative. It was not quite so necessary to insist that the South of yesterday and today was the same. In 1925 the state (along with the city of Nashville) finished the construction of a massive World War I memorial next to

<sup>48</sup> For instance, the *Tennessean* posted weekly advertisements in the Sunday editions from James E. Clark, secretary for the Conference Committee on National Preparedness. These amounted to studied warnings to workers to avoid the temptations of radicalism. For an example see "Whence Comes the Strength of Supermen?," *Nashville Tennessean and American*, March 2, 1919, p. A10. For a sample of the paper's editorial position, see "Answering Bolshevism with Facts," *Nashville Tennessean and American*, March 23, 1919, sec. 1, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> See *Nashville Tennessean* "Home-Coming Edition," March 31, 1919, esp. "Affiliated U.D.C. Chapters' Part in Parade," p. 16, and "Girls Will Form Beautiful Scene Before Capitol," p. 2; and "Women and Children Share in Great Welcome to 114th F.A.," *Nashville Tennessean*, April 1, 1919, p. 2. Theda Bara, famous as "the Vamp," advertised her latest movie release in the spring of 1919 by arguing, in the text of her advertisement, that she could have easily convinced Wilhelm to surrender himself to the Allies. She simply needed to be allowed to spend time with him alone. See Theda Bara, "Give Kaiser to Vampire," *Nashville Tennessean and American*, March 23, 1919, p. B4.

the state capitol, combining commemorative space with a practical office building, according to the Progressive model.<sup>50</sup> The next year the UDC placed a statue celebrating Confederate womanhood on the grounds, but rather off to the side in a corner. Next to the massive memorial, it was dwarfed.<sup>51</sup> Then, in 1927 the Civil War battle of Nashville (1864) was memorialized by a great column, but to celebrate nationalism not the Lost Cause. Indeed, the shaft was called the “Peace monument,” and, to deepen the point, its dedication took place on Armistice Day. The ceremonies were actually about the world war. The relevant fight was the one of 1917–1918, which, celebrants said, had made America a global force for good. As orator of the day, Lea made this point specifically. He insisted that the country had assumed a new identity through this conflict. The United States was thought to be “a clumsy overgrown nation of heterogeneous people, united only by the love of gold,” he said. By virtue of the doughboys in France, however, the world saw a people who “neither sought nor accepted treasure or territory as a reward for its great part in the victory of arms.” As military victor, the country had repudiated militarism. “America was content with a satisfaction that comes from unselfish service,” Lea

<sup>50</sup> Much thought was given to converting the Parthenon—the only building remaining from the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in 1897—into a memorial. A panel appointed by the governor decided that any structure should combine space for reflection with a useful, practical facility, in keeping with the current Progressive vision. Reflecting this attitude, the design for a downtown monument (which still exists) won out over the Parthenon. Thus, the Tennessee War Memorial Building was planned according to the national, Progressive definition of best practices (among other things, it would contain office space). Also, importantly, the state chose to build a downtown facility because that location allowed the state’s African American population to come and view it. The Parthenon was situated in segregated space in Centennial Park. See the documents devoted to the deliberation on the “Soldier’s Memorial,” Albert Houston Roberts Governor’s Papers, 1918–1921, GP 38 (TSLA), microfilm, reel 27, frames 1486–1551; “Parthenon Plan Is Insisted on by Kiwanians,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 1, 1919, p. 4; “Rotary to Keep Up Its Fight for Parthenon Plan,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 5, 1919, p. 5; “Negroes Object to Parthenon Plans,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 6, 1919, p. 3; “Office Building Is Recommended for Memorial,” *Nashville Tennessean and American*, March 16, 1919, sec. 1, p. 8; and “The Soldiers’ Memorial,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 19, 1919, p. 6. On the Progressive vision of building practical memorials, see G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 105–11.

<sup>51</sup> The monument, the Tennessee Monument to the Women of the Confederacy, was designed by Belle Kinney, a renowned sculptor who was originally from Tennessee. The piece she designed (in 1917) fit perfectly with turn-of-the-twentieth-century gender and white southern historical concerns. However, construction of the statue in Nashville was delayed by the war. When placed next to the War Memorial Building in 1926, it looked not only small but also distinctly dated. More to the point, according to the Tennessee American Legion, its memorial reflected the decidedly masculinist and Americanist vision released by the European conflict. The Legion noted that its building reflected not only American power but also the urgency of preparedness, including physical fitness: “Flabby muscles and ‘fat heads’ were an evil, while ‘fitness for war is the price of peace.” Cynthia Mills, “Gratitude and Gender Wars: Monuments to the Women of the Sixties,” in Mills and Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, 183–200; “Editorial,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, September 15, 1925, sec. 1 (quotations in note).

concluded.<sup>52</sup> Thus, although the Peace monument commemorated the Civil War, the important symbolism for the former colonel was that the boys of '17 had proved to the world that the United States represented something new in global politics. Even the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) seemed to agree. The issue of the state American Legion newspaper that celebrated the completion of the War Memorial Building included a bloc of text where the adjutant of the UCV told the young veterans that the doughboys held center stage now. They had proved that "the American soldier, irrespective of section, has done his duty, surmounted every obstacle, and reached every objective, regardless of cost."<sup>53</sup> Thus, even the old men in gray were speaking in terms of the historical continuity of an American citizen soldiery that never lost.

But this change in pride of place did not cause either Lea or the newly formed Tennessee Legion to divorce World War I memory from Confederate history expressly. The two could still be blended. The Peace monument dedication was one example. And, after all, a statue in honor of southern women during the Civil War was placed on the memorial grounds, while the War Memorial Building itself had a Confederate room in it.<sup>54</sup> If Lea used the doughboys to emphasize a new Americanism, neither he nor others in Tennessee's heritage community insisted on placing the world war in a completely separate interpretive or physical space.

The economic collapse changed this pairing. Lea and the Tennessee Legion remade their world war memory when the bottom fell out in the 1930s. For the former colonel and his compatriots, remembrance of their fight was tied to the nature of the capitalist world that grew out of it. It was the failure of this economic order that generated the creative shock. Said another way, Lea and company replaced the UDC's merger of gender stratification and Confederate war memory when it became necessary to focus on what the disaster of postwar capitalism had done to the twentieth-century world.

The first hint of the economy's central nature came during the 1920s. During the jazz decade, Tennessee's war memory became a kind of state-level component of what Adam Tooze has described as America's hegemony by prosperity, because a main theme of war remembrance during these years was to blend wartime purity of motive with optimistic

<sup>52</sup> "Battlefield Monument to Peace Dedicated as Armistice Day Climax," *Nashville Tennessean*, November 12, 1927, sec. 1, pp. 1, 10 (first quotation on 1); "Col. Lea Praises Valor of America at Civic Luncheon," *Nashville Tennessean*, November 12, 1927, sec. 1, p. 1, sec. 2, p. 3 (second, third, and fourth quotations).

<sup>53</sup> Harry Rene Lee, "Greetings from Confederate Veterans," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, September 15, 1925, sec. 5.

<sup>54</sup> "Nashville's Parthenon First Considered," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, September 15, 1925, sec. 1.

New Era commercial expansionism.<sup>55</sup> The National Life and Accident Company captured this spirit perfectly. In a full-page advertisement placed—significantly—in the *Tennessee Legionnaire*, the state’s American Legion newspaper, the company beamed with pride that its headquarters building in downtown Nashville was just a few blocks from the memorial and was deliberately “constructed in keeping with [that structure’s] wonderful architectural beauty.” More important, the company’s office building was a “monument to our men out on ‘the firing line,’ well and favorably known as Shield Men.” By such a quick turn of phrase, selling insurance became a kind of soldiering. In the same issue of the paper, the head of Nashville’s chamber of commerce made a similar point. The officer boasted of the business community’s generosity in giving over four city blocks “located in the heart of the business district” in order to provide for “the memory of [Tennessee’s] sacred dead.”<sup>56</sup> Boosterism and soldierly altruism seemed to blend so easily. No one in the Legion found anything to protest in such pronouncements. After all, the private economy seemed capable of creating perpetual prosperity. Thus, Lea could busy himself with Governor Austin Peay’s legislative program, while the Legion labored to create the hospital and benefits system and wrote to the governor’s office to talk about flags in schools.<sup>57</sup> However, the money did not hold up. Indeed, by 1933 the editor of the *Tennessee Legionnaire* openly sneered at the 1920s as the former “balmy days.”<sup>58</sup>

For its part, the Legion was forced by the 1930s to embrace a position close to that of Louisiana governor Huey P. Long, a shift produced by a brutal conflict with corporate power. Like most Americans, Legionnaires tried to adapt to the Depression, but a sudden combination of big business and government moved them to creative anger. Wall Street and the National Chamber of Commerce formed a lobby known

<sup>55</sup> Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America, and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931* (New York, 2014). In contrast to the long-standing view that descent into a second world war was the inevitable result of the failures of the first, Tooze argues that the armistice and the treaty of Versailles held up until the late 1920s. The power of the American economy (effectively allied with Britain’s) forced what might be called a monetary solution to global order. Although Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, and the Japanese militarists—among others—fumed about this solution, according to Tooze they fumed as outsiders looking in until the Depression and, more important, the collapse of the gold standard changed the game.

<sup>56</sup> Advertisement for the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, *Tennessee Legionnaire*, September 15, 1925, sec. 1 (first and second quotations); John Nelson, “Nashville Welcomes Legion and Auxiliary,” *ibid.*, sec. 5 (third and fourth quotations). In the same spirit, see “What the War Memorial Means to Us Who Helped Build It”; “Parmer Had Many Jobs in Memorial Building”; and “War Memorial and Victory Park Work of A. J. Krebs Company,” all *ibid.*, sec. 3.

<sup>57</sup> In Peay’s correspondence there are several letters and other communications from the national American Legion requesting that the Tennessee governor help sponsor what was termed the American Flag Movement to engender respect for the colors. Austin Peay Governor’s Papers, 1923–1927, GP 40 (TSLA), microfilm, reel 11, frames 001814–21.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph L. Lumpkin, “After Fifteen Years,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, November 9, 1933, p. 1.

as the National Economy League to cut federal expenses in order to balance the budget, as deflation compressed the money supply further. To accomplish this objective, Congress passed what was popularly known as the Economy Bill in 1933, just as President Franklin Roosevelt was entering office. The legislation slashed benefits to disabled veterans, budgets for veterans' hospitals, and support for widows and orphans. Up to this point the Tennessee Legion had been careful to distance itself from any form of radicalism—Bonus Army marchers in particular. But now, with the passage of the Economy Bill, the members were provoked to absolute fury. Failure to compensate the able veterans did not stoke their rage; the studied attack on the helpless victims of mass industrial war made them livid.<sup>59</sup>

It was for this reason that Tennessee Legionnaires now insisted that the real war get into the books. No more brave southern boys advancing in tight, linear formation. To the contrary, the *Tennessee Legionnaire's* editor, Joseph L. Lumpkin, insisted on revealing hard truth. On the eve of Armistice Day, 1933, he ridiculed the practice of commemorating the dead—repudiating the original cult of remembrance—sniping that only “old men and women” could now believe in the “quiet scene of white crosses and beautiful poppies.” Legionnaires “are deprived of this idealistic, peaceful dream.” The editor clarified that the organization must look at “grim reality and sordidness,” because only a small number of the sacrificed lay buried in Europe. “We know of the thousands of broken bodies who returned with us,” he admitted. Some died relatively quickly, but others are “still with us, their bodies diseased and maimed, their minds uneasy and disturbed.” Other Legionnaire commentators confirmed the shell shock, gassing, and other horrors.<sup>60</sup> What drove the

<sup>59</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 199–204; Pencak, *For God and Country*, 192–94; Rumer, *American Legion*, 196–204. For examples of the Tennessee Legion's opposition to the Bonus Army, see “Dep't. Opposes Bonus Armies in the Future,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, December 15, 1932, p. 1; and “Bonus Marchers,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, May 4, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Joseph L. Lumpkin, “After Fifteen Years,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, November 9, 1933, p. 1. Lumpkin certainly had a taste for controversial and even extreme statements. He was replaced as editor in 1934, but there was little to no change in the newspaper's tone. The real experience of American soldiers in the war was a far cry from the celebration made upon the 1919 return. Essentially, the Americans sent an army prepared to 1914 standards to fight a war conducted with 1918 savagery and expertise. The army's overly large infantry divisions—the so-called square division—suggested the point. For all General John J. Pershing's crowing about the superiority and heritage of the American rifleman, the reality was that the basic American infantry units were twice-plus the size of their European counterparts for the simple reason that they would have to absorb appalling casualties to compensate for their inexperience. Though not discussed in the flush of seeming victory in 1919, in the wake of the Economy Bill the truth came out. Edward G. Lengel, *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918* (New York, 2008); Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces* (College Station, Tex., 2012); Mark Ethan Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York, 2007).



Tennessee Legion to wrath was not the Bonus but the National Economy League's attack on the men whom modern firepower had turned into enfeebled dependents.

Enraged by the Economy League's impertinence, Tennessee Legionnaires, through their editor, responded with venomous sarcasm. Said Lumpkin, "the notorious one percent of our population who possess the major part of the wealth of this nation" have so efficiently "gutted the treasury" that they now need to absorb the veterans' benefits. If this was the case, he continued, the American doughboy needed to turn around and fight the war again but in the opposite direction. Lumpkin contended that war had not been fought to destroy a "single despot" just so a "special class" of the "immensely rich" could gain total power. In another article, Lumpkin opined that the league members simply wanted "their moneybags . . . filled with gold pilfered from the needy and sick men who have so valiantly served their country."<sup>61</sup> The Louisiana Kingfish would have relished such language.

But however much the editor lathered about the "notorious one percent," Legionnaires were actually constructive in their response. They focused their loathing for the avarice of the wealthy through their understanding of their war. Specifically, they created a contrast between the arrogant selfishness of Wall Street and the obligations that proper citizens of a warfare state should feel. As Legionnaires argued, the nation must be composed of a people all willing to perform their obligations both at the moment of battle and later. In this respect, modern war was a great leveler. The totality of industrial combat required citizens who internalized the need for constant sacrifice. This commitment was particularly important because, as the Legionnaires stated, 1918 had hardly witnessed the "war to end all wars." Global conflagration was always possible. For this reason military preparedness was necessary (a Legion position since 1920), along with an internalized and democratized spirit of responsibility.<sup>62</sup>

The Legionnaires made this argument with something called the universal draft or universal conscription. Back in 1922, the national body

<sup>61</sup> Joseph L. Lumpkin, "God Bless the American Legion," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, January 2, 1933, p. 4 (first through fifth quotations); Joseph L. Lumpkin, "The Battle of Bullies' Run," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, January 16, 1933, p. 5 (sixth quotation).

<sup>62</sup> Like the national organization, the Tennessee Department of the American Legion navigated between opposing profiteering in war—indeed, verging on arguing that all war represented a rich man's war and a poor man's fight—and advocating for constant (and updated) preparedness. If any group angered the Legionnaires more than bankers and the National Economy League, it was pacifists. See, for example, "The Modern MacBeth," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, April 20, 1933, p. 1; and Milton A. Reckord, "National Defense," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, August 3, 1933, p. 3.

had crafted a resolution (urging Congress to pass it as a law) stating that in any future conflict the nation should confiscate not only the bodies of men through conscription but also all forms of property, making everyone and everything in the society usable to fight. The American Legion did not abandon this position until 1941.<sup>63</sup> In the wake of the Economy Bill, members of the Tennessee Legion returned to this resolution with a vengeance. Typical of many commentators, state commander Peabody Howard told a Fourth of July barbecue gathering that in the current world Americans must always be prepared for war, but in so doing “we must continue our fight for the Universal Draft Act. Profits must be taken out of war. No more millionaires should be created while the youth of this nation gives its blood.” To emphasize the point, the Tennessee Legion convention that fall affirmed the universal draft resolution without dissent.<sup>64</sup>

Thus did the Tennessee Legion deploy the enormous demands and destructiveness of modern war against the enormous arrogance of class. But, critically, its approach was not simply a shot at profiteering. The Legionnaires advocated war socialism as a way to describe a democracy of duty. Wrath about the Economy Bill was the vehicle to reimagine the responsibilities of citizenship. Commander Howard stated it eloquently at the barbecue. Using words that might have embarrassed the UDC, he paraphrased and quoted Lincoln’s second inaugural and the Gettysburg Address, stating that “with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on” to “bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the brunt of the battle.” The immense human destructiveness of war simply demanded continued attention to those whom it shattered. But more, the commander insisted, if we do so “this nation under God shall have a new birth; that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall be reestablished in this great nation of ours.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, universalizing the sense of duty to the disabled would provide the means to recreate true democracy in a nation now victimized by narrow privilege.

As the Legionnaires contrasted leveling and oligarchy, they did not stop with the debt owed to wounded veterans. They further defined universal responsible citizenship by using the evolution of their own

<sup>63</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 175–78; Pencak, *For God and Country*, 311–14.

<sup>64</sup> “Tenn. Com’dr Warns Against Money Tyrant,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, July 20, 1933, p. 2 (quotation); “Indomitable Spirit of the Legion in Convention Resolutions,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, September 14, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> “Tenn. Com’dr Warns Against Money Tyrant,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, July 20, 1933, p. 2.

organization. When the American Legion was formed immediately after the war, it focused on the politics of 100 percent Americanism and anti-radicalism.<sup>66</sup> And, of course, it never abandoned this politics. However, the local posts in Tennessee and elsewhere also began to engage in community service, particularly youth activities. Starting in the 1920s, Legion posts sponsored baseball teams, bands, and Boy Scout troops, and then created what would become Boys State.<sup>67</sup> Increasingly, 100 percent Americanism became less a matter of purging undesirables and more the idea of modeling good citizenship in the community. When the Depression began and then deepened, various forms of relief work were added to the agenda. In short, for the American Legion, Americanism evolved from the Red Scare into becoming an example of Herbert Hoover's "American individualism."<sup>68</sup>

Legion posts in Tennessee were always more than eager to publicize such work. Issues of the *Tennessee Legionnaire* featured reports from posts like Cumberland County's, which, in January 1933, was cooperating with the local parent-teacher association to supply milk and clothing to needy schoolchildren. In the same issue readers learned that Knoxville's members had organized a relief depot that provided clothing and food generally, and furniture for one needy family to replace items repossessed.<sup>69</sup> Every issue featured such notes. However, during the fight over the Economy Bill, it now mattered to call attention to the meaning of this community service.

The *Tennessee Legionnaire's* editor made the case aggressively: "Can service to humanity, both inside and outside of the ranks of war veterans . . . be reckoned in industrial and banking profits[?]" State commander Peabody Howard, in his report for the year 1933, noted more positively that "in these times of need and want" each post had been "ever watchful for what really will benefit the community," be that relief, entertainment, "civic development," or the like. A report on a major relief event in Memphis—sponsored by the local post—made the obvious point that the organization's "public service is the branch which most attracts the attention of the non-Legionnaire." But it was the Los Angeles *Examiner* that made the

<sup>66</sup> Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, 1999), 220–45; Rumer, *American Legion*, 50–54; Pencak, *For God and Country*, 8–23.

<sup>67</sup> Pencak, *For God and Country*, 278–301; Rumer, *American Legion*, 205–10. For year-by-year reports of the Tennessee Department of the American Legion regarding these activities, see Guy H. May and Fred D. Estes, *History of the American Legion—Department of Tennessee, 1919–1933* (Nashville, 1933).

<sup>68</sup> Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (Garden City, N.Y., 1922).

<sup>69</sup> "Cumberland County Unit Kept Busy" and "Knoxville Unit Plans National Defense Program," *Tennessee Legionnaire*, February 2, 1933, p. 6.

case most eloquently. Thanking the organization for help in a recent flood, the paper stated that Legionnaires “sp[ed] on their way to the point of danger.” Theirs was “personal service at personal sacrifice,” and “all in the line of duty.” The Legion’s “imperative to their patriotism,” said the *Examiner*, worked in peace and war.<sup>70</sup> Here was the true rejoinder to the National Economy League. From their experience of horrible modern war, veterans had developed a collective character of exemplary “personal service at personal sacrifice.” In short, in their rage at the Economy Bill, Tennessee Legionnaires did not just scream foul about their entitlement; they made their experience in war the foundation for a citizenship of perpetual obligation.

But, for the terms of this essay, it is also important to observe that in constructing their argument the members never referenced proper womanhood. Legionnaires made themselves the exemplars of duty and sacrifice, or, better, they made the real war they experienced in France the foundation of their legitimacy. For the Tennessee Legion, women mattered only when members of the Auxiliary were enlisted to support the cause of military preparedness. Legionnaires wanted it understood that their female members were not pacifists. Beyond this, womanhood, the Confederate version or otherwise, made no appearance. There were no more references to “sacred beings.” The Legion’s vision of democratized good citizenship had no expressly feminine component and no attachment to the Civil War. In responding to the crisis of the Depression, the Tennessee Legion had rejected the earlier imagery of 1917–1919.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Joseph L. Lumpkin, “God Bless the American Legion,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, January 2, 1933, p. 1 (first quotation); “State Commander’s Annual Report,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, August 17, 1933, p. 2 (second, third, and fourth quotations); “Charity Is Aided in a Big Way by Legion Post Sunday Show,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, January 16, 1933, p. 7 (fifth quotation); “Foraging,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, February 15, 1934, p. 3 (sixth through ninth quotations).

<sup>71</sup> “Women’s Patriotic Meeting Will Spread Over Nation,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, February 16, 1933, p. 6; “Women and War,” *Tennessee Legionnaire*, March 1, 1934, p. 4. Although the Tennessee Legion appreciated the efforts of the auxiliary, it was no small point that, for Legionnaires, women had shifted from Albert Smith’s “sacred beings” (see note 32) to being simply mothers. It was important in this regard to gain motherhood’s assent to the cause of national defense. In the same way, Gold Star Mothers were privileged and respected victims of war, rather than cultural arbiters of national progress. The authority once possessed by groups like the UDC had been effectively seized by the state (and by the whims of global politics). Though she reaches different conclusions, see Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933* (New York, 2010), 185–208. One should also observe that the Tennessee Department of the American Legion had long since abandoned the idea that men in military service should be behavioral/moral innocents save in their idealistic devotion to combat sacrifice. During the war itself, they had been far less morally disciplined in their behavior than groups like the Davidson County women would have sanctioned. In the years after the war, the Tennessee Legion made this evident in their formation of the so-called 40 and 8 Society, which behaved, openly, like a college fraternity. See May and Estes, *History of the American Legion—Department of Tennessee*, 182–84. In regard to the moral discipline campaign during the war, see Kimberley A. Reilly, “‘A Perilous Venture for Democracy’: Soldiers, Sexual Purity, and American Citizenship in the First World War,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 13 (April 2014), 223–55.

Lea abandoned this imagery as well. In the late 1930s he came back from his personal misfortunes to become a reform advocate again. He, like the Legion, now merged the real war with the catastrophe of the Depression. He stated in his “Kaiser Story” that no one but a frontline soldier could understand the real horrors of history’s “first truly mechanical war,” which made the “bloodiest battles of other wars seem by comparison” to be a minor trench raid.<sup>72</sup> In a later document he argued that because of this unexampled destructiveness it was now imperative to “preserve the United States as a country worthy of the suffering and sacrifices of its soldiers and sailors.”<sup>73</sup> And because of the Depression, creating such a country required reform. In other words, the nation’s moral foundation no longer rested on the hope that the women of tomorrow might be as pure as their maternal ancestors, but on the gravity of a war-making that exceeded all forms of combat in the past. The “suffering and sacrifices” required by such mechanized viciousness necessitated building a social and economic order worth the human cost of its defense. In the years after his brief prison term, Lea drafted many proposals and projects that sought to define the structure of this order.<sup>74</sup>

Like the Legionnaires, Lea began this creative rethinking in a state of anger. In his case, collapse was personal as well as national. When the former colonel wrote “The Kaiser Story,” he used a vitriolic language worthy of *Tennessee Legionnaire* editor Lumpkin, and one cannot help but credit much of this venom to the fact that Lea wrote the piece in the North Carolina state penitentiary. During the 1920s Lea had aspired to become a media mogul after he completed his work with Governor Peay, laboring to acquire other newspapers around the state to add to the *Tennessean*. Pursuing this goal placed him in partnership with one Rogers Caldwell, of an important Nashville family, and it was Caldwell’s tangled financial affairs that landed Lea in the banking business of North Carolina. Although it was later demonstrated that Lea had committed no financial misdeed himself, this proof came after his

<sup>72</sup> Lea, “Kaiser Story,” 83.

<sup>73</sup> “Foundation for Veterans,” n.d. [ca. 1942–1945], Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000659–83 (quotation on 000663).

<sup>74</sup> For the most part these proposals took the form of self-funding foundations to support various causes. However, Lea also promoted the first version of the interstate highway system embodied in the so-called Bulkley Bill of 1938 (named for Senator Robert J. Bulkley of Ohio), and he attempted to create and sustain a farm journal. As his daughter points out, Lea never lacked for ideas. His papers hold typescript after typescript of plans. His fundamental personal aim was to regain ownership of the *Tennessean* (which he had lost as his life collapsed in the 1930s), though he was never able to achieve this goal. Tidwell, *Luke Lea of Tennessee*, 280–85.

sentencing and incarceration. The former war hero, senator, and right-hand man to Tennessee's most important governor found himself in a prison cell.<sup>75</sup> Under the circumstances one could hardly expect that he would write his memoir of his earlier moment in history without bitterness, and Lea had a knack for sarcasm as it was. But, as with his Legionnaire comrades, the former colonel was not simply letting off steam.

In "The Kaiser Story," Lea argued that the true issue now was to redeem the idealism that had driven the doughboys to sign up originally. In 1917, he insisted, "there was a fire of real patriotism burning in the breast of every American soldier." This fire burned "so fiercely that even seventeen years of ingratitude, humiliation, and injustice have been unable to quench it." The desire for it was still there. This patriotism, Lea continued, had nothing to do with any false promise that the doughboys would make the world safe for democracy. No thinking soldier believed in this platitude, he said. Rather, the issue was common justice. When the doughboys saw the destruction of France, "the American soldier fixed war guilt on [the kaiser]." Wilhelm was a criminal, literally. Lea actually compared the German emperor to gangster John Dillinger, observing that both "carried their merciless warfare to the women and children and non-combatants." With guilt thus properly affixed, Lea now put his real war—previously confined to his 1918 diary—into the narrative. He described a fight "stripped of all the panoply of glory [and revealed to be] a monster mutilating the bodies of the dead and raping the virtue of the quick." Hideous were the "deadly gases at Vimy Ridge and the drum fire of shell at Ypres." The kaiser had even "threatened the peace of America. He had destroyed American freedom from European conflicts." Lea mentioned submarines in this regard, and also German "planes [that] were about to cast their dark shadows over peace loving American cities." Lea then concluded by asking whether the kaiser should not have been "made to suffer in some small measure [for this] orgy of torture he had inflicted upon more than half of mankind."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Tidwell, *Luke Lea of Tennessee*, 146–50, 202–79. Lea's imprisonment hurt him enormously. His papers contain clipping after clipping endlessly documenting the entire process from sentencing to release. Yet, this "criminal" maintained a very loyal following back home in Tennessee who welcomed him as a hero upon his return to Nashville. There was also enough narrative drama involved that Robert Penn Warren made use of the incident. Joseph Blotner, *Robert Penn Warren: A Biography* (New York, 1997), 205–6.

<sup>76</sup> Lea, "Kaiser Story," 10 (first and second quotations), 11 (third quotation), 27 (fourth quotation), 30 (fifth through eighth quotations), 7 (ninth quotation).

This vibrant prose raised the question of why the emperor had escaped. Lea attributed the kaiser's successful flight to the willingness of aristocrats around Europe (and in Britain in particular) to rescue one of their own. More important, according to Lea, the larger peace process was at fault, because money mattered more than punishing the guilty. Specifically, he charged that the Allies' chief purpose in the settlement was to find ways to escape the war debts they owed the United States.<sup>77</sup> Wilhelm mattered little. However one would dispute this interpretation as history, in Lea's tale the important result was that common justice was denied, and this, in turn, became "the most compelling cause of [the world's] present universal disillusionment." This "crowning act of international perfidy . . . killed instantly [our] patriotism and idealism." What emerged was "a crass materialism . . . [along with] vulgarity and mocking of religion." This decline was clear in the 1920s, Lea insisted. Then from the same fundamental cause came the Depression, which represented not an economic downturn but a collapse created by the "spineless acquiescence in obsolete forms of distribution and standards of exchange which . . . has produced such a state of poverty and pauperism that a large portion of the population is content to eke out a miserable existence upon doles."<sup>78</sup>

Thus, in "The Kaiser Story," it had been all of one piece since 1918. Wilhelm's escape created a universal skepticism that destroyed all forms of high-mindedness and public spirit. Religion had been mocked, while "crass materialism" grew out of the same failure, in turn creating the process by which economic collapse had occurred. Since the emperor's travesty, neither the United States nor the world had bothered to aim high, and both were now watching fascism rise from the muck. But, as Lea also stated, the desire for "real patriotism" still burned; it simply needed a proper objective and a proper means of achievement. This focus was Lea's purpose after leaving prison. He returned to a hero's welcome in Nashville, and then moved to Washington, D.C., to work in public relations.<sup>79</sup> In the process, he fashioned several proposals to ensure that next time the war would be worth it.

<sup>77</sup> "Collection of International Debts," n.d. [ca. 1937–1939], Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000436–48. In his masterful reevaluation of America's attempt in the 1920s to create world order through economic hegemony, Adam Tooze also makes a great deal of the inter-Allied debt question. However, in his view, the debt question acted as a poison, particularly in terms of creating continual conflict between France and Weimar Germany. Tooze, *Deluge*, 440–61.

<sup>78</sup> Lea, "Kaiser Story," 31–32 (first and second quotations on 31; third quotation on 31–32; fourth quotation on 32).

<sup>79</sup> Tidwell, *Luke Lea of Tennessee*, 276–79.



Ever the creative reformer, Lea drafted ideas for everything from the first version of the interstate highway system to a farm journal that would preserve elements of America's fundamental agrarian roots.<sup>80</sup> However, from the mid-1930s to the end of his life in 1945, Lea focused his ideas on two main goals. First, like his American Legion friends, Lea never believed in the possibility of creating a world safe from conflict. Rather, he sought to turn the American hemisphere into a cooperative alliance of democracies capable of real common defense: a "union of the neighboring countries in the Americas so strong as to forestall any attack upon the Western Hemisphere." As part of this plan, he wanted to promote hemispheric friendship. To this end, his proposed interstate highway system would have extended south of the Rio Grande. In addition, he proposed creating a scholarship system, modeled on the Rhodes scholar program in the United Kingdom, bringing together young men from the hemisphere to be schooled in the United States so that, during their formative years, they could develop the value of a common friendship and vision of life. The "student nationals" from other countries would be "given an accurate cross-section of American life," he said. Our "future safety," Lea insisted, depended on "understanding and teamwork between the United States and its neighbors in the Americas." Through hemispheric "bonds of understanding," the countries could provide an "unbroken front in re-enthroning throughout the world a democratic civilization." "Pan American cooperation" would create in new form a separate world insulated from the decrepitude and violence of Europe (and now Asia).<sup>81</sup>

Such a democratic civilization demanded restructuring at home as well. The Depression required the construction of a new economy beyond the "obsolete forms of distribution and standards of exchange" that had created the collapse. As an old-line Progressive, Lea had never been fond of corporate monopoly. Now he argued that economic democracy depended on the active cooperation and leadership of what he called the "liberal elements," by which he meant the farm and laboring

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 280–85. On the proposed interstate highway system, see the documents in Lea Papers, reel 12, frames 002092–2176, and reel 14, frames 000797–830.

<sup>81</sup> "Digest of a Program for Enacting Certain Proposed Legislation and Financing a Membership Campaign," n.d. [ca. 1944], Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000503–13 (first quotation on 000504); "Foundation [for College Scholarships]," n.d., Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000635–38 (second through fifth quotations on 000636; sixth, seventh, and eighth quotations on 000637). Lea was hardly the only member of the American Legion to support hemisphericism. In essence, ever since the Congress passed the naval appropriations bill of 1916 (envisioning a navy second to none), visions of hemispheric isolationism were blended with support for military preparedness and a warfare state. Rumer, *American Legion*, 229.

populations.<sup>82</sup> In his formulation, this call was less a reference to class war than to a universal adequate standard of living. He continually pointed to the need to create and preserve what he described as purchasing power.

Lea linked this purchasing power to one fundamental object: widespread home ownership. Although Lea died in 1945, a year before the film *It's a Wonderful Life* came out, the former colonel sounded a lot like George Bailey—or the suburban developers the Levitt brothers. Lea wanted to create a government finance corporation that would actually “construct a home for the head of any family who is willing and able to work, and sell it [to him]” on “easy terms.” As Lea described it, these terms would go past the New Deal’s Federal Housing Administration loan guarantee to combine flat interest, amortization, and fire and life insurance in one small payment. Thus, “the greatest industry in the world—home ownership—[would be enabled] to be the cheapest financed and cheap financing is the basis of prosperity for any industry.”<sup>83</sup>

Happily, such a widespread home ownership would recapture the idealism lost in the world war. As an advocate for the “crabgrass frontier,” Lea found the way to replace Prohibition. For Lea, the home, not coerced sobriety, would create virtuous national character. “Home owners are the bulwark of every government,” he said. “An employee who owns his own home never strikes,” never quits without reason, and “is the more efficient.” The home provides “him stability of purpose.” Workable credit for a population longing for a home will restore “the purchasing power of this thriftiest of our citizenship.”<sup>84</sup> An economy enlarged to become a democracy of home owners would become a tranquil, orderly “Main Street” nation.

Moreover, this Main Street world blended morality with capitalist business practice. Lea was in public relations now, after all, and this work immersed him completely in the process of engineering consent. In keeping with this perspective, he argued that the country’s “liberal elements” had trouble making their case because they suffered from bad

<sup>82</sup> Lea, “Kaiser Story,” 31–32; “Cooperative Relations Between Liberal Elements,” n.d. [ca. 1945], Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000465–75.

<sup>83</sup> Untitled typescript discussing a political program to beat Franklin Roosevelt, n.d. [ca. 1936], Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000386–89 (quotations on 000388). Lea hardly invented the idea of using houses and home sales as a bulwark of social order. Alvin York, for example, had been recruited by Governor A. H. Roberts to become a poster child for an “‘Own Your Own Home’ rally” back in 1919. John Perry, *Sgt. York: His Life, Legend, and Legacy—The Remarkable Untold Story of Sergeant Alvin C. York* (Nashville, 1997), 126.

<sup>84</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985) (first quotation); Untitled typescript discussing a political program to beat Franklin Roosevelt, Lea Papers, reel 14, frame 000388 (second through sixth quotations).

publicity. Their problem was poor image. In response, he proposed creating a foundation to sponsor a national radio show that would offer accurate information and inspirational programming. This radio show, in turn, would sponsor contests to raise money, imitating the practice of the corporate owners of major brand-name products like Old Gold cigarettes and Pabst beer.<sup>85</sup> The country's liberal elements would thus support their cause with ad campaigns and catchy programs. In sum, universalizing home ownership hinged not on class war but on using the institutions and culture of capitalism to create democracy. Radio, cigarettes, and contests went hand-in-hand with stable home owners. The result would be an America like Bedford Falls.

And it would be this Bedford Falls-like nation that good men and women would willingly defend. When Lea proposed creating a foundation to promote the cause of returning veterans, he argued that "Main Streeters compose the majority of the Nation. They are freer from 'isms' than any other segment of the population of the United States." He continued, "they are the hope of perpetuating the institutions which the Veterans are fighting and dying to preserve."<sup>86</sup>

Thus did Lea and his American Legion friends change the meaning of World War I from what it had been in 1919. Of course, they could do so because much had changed since they came home from France. Public relations, consumer capitalism, the demise of Prohibition, and alterations in gender roles had developed during the Jazz Age, and Lea and company were certainly reflecting these changes in their reformulation of their cause. But the point of this argument has been to highlight the creative relationship between war memory and capitalism. The failure of the moral economy stimulated Lea's and the Legion's active rethinking. That rethinking, in turn, was bound to war experience—the real one. Lea and his compatriots had been willing to discuss modern industrial war in archaic language in 1919. There was no room for this in the 1930s. From this insistent new realism they then imagined an expanded democracy. However much they despised radicalism, their world war prodded them to rethink political economy. They insisted that young men drafted for the next war should defend nothing less than a society of democratized prosperity and universal responsibility.

<sup>85</sup> Although Lea spoke of promoting advertising contests for every one of the foundations he proposed, the idea of connecting brand-name promotions to the political cause of "liberal elements" is the most telling use of the concept. "Cooperative Relations Between Liberal Elements," Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000465–75.

<sup>86</sup> "Foundation for Veterans," Lea Papers, reel 14, frame 000669.

In the process of making this case, Lea and the Legionnaires swept the UDC and its cause of privileged womanhood from the field. The “sacred beings” so necessary to the cause in 1917–1919 disappeared completely so far as the former colonel and the Tennessee Department of the American Legion were concerned. Given this shift, it was perhaps no mere coincidence that Douglas Southall Freeman rose during the 1930s and 1940s to become the arbiter of Confederate history. In addition to his powerful biography of Robert E. Lee, Freeman authored the monumental three-volume work *Lee’s Lieutenants*. Significantly, the major theme of this work is military power, not sectional vindication or gender stratification. The volumes evaluate the effectiveness of each of Lee’s subordinate commanders, but, more important, Freeman discusses the toll that a modern war of attrition takes on an army’s officer corps.<sup>87</sup> Given that these volumes appeared between 1942 and 1944, such a focus is hardly surprising. In the new real world there was little room for the UDC’s gender purity.

But if Lea and his fellows had successfully replaced privileged womanhood with democratized prosperity and universal responsibility, they necessarily raised questions about boundaries. These Tennessee veterans represented a segregated society. The former colonel’s wish to promote a Main Street America through access to home ownership was certainly suggestive, but what did it mean when translated racially? After all, as is well known, the suburbanization of the country in practice became the story of discriminatory lending, redlining, and white flight. As it played out in reality, Bedford Falls became the path to a new, economically devastating, segregation.<sup>88</sup>

For his part, Lea never directly addressed either civil rights or the relationship of race and housing. Given that he died in 1945, he was never forced into the open by such events as the Dixiecrat rebellion. But

<sup>87</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography* (4 vols.; New York, 1934–1935); Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants: A Study in Command* (3 vols.; New York, 1942–1944). See also Keith D. Dickson, *Sustaining Southern Identity: Douglas Southall Freeman and Memory in the Modern South* (Baton Rouge, 2011). Note Freeman’s argument that “when a small nation wages a long war,” it is a mistake to assume that it has an “inexhaustible supply of competent general officers.” Freeman, *Lee’s Lieutenants*, 1:xxvii.

<sup>88</sup> David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago, 2007), 176–240; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, 1996), 33–56; Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 42–59; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 190–230. Lea’s role in the idea of the interstate highway system should be noted in this regard as well. However, judging by the documents in his papers, Lea did not see these roads as a way to break into and through urban neighborhoods (unlike Robert Moses). See a typescript speech from his friend and partner R. C. Marshall (an engineer), March 12, 1938, Lea Papers, reel 12, frames 002168–77.

Lea lived to see President Harry S. Truman sworn in, and he took time to speculate on partisan prospects in coming elections. Now that Roosevelt was dead, Lea observed, the Democratic Party could no longer depend on his personality. The Republicans were sure to fashion a platform “favorable to the advancement of human rights” and would thus, he opined, promise to eclipse the progress made by the former president. The Democrats could not afford to become conservative, as Lea termed it. Tantalizingly, Lea argued that the party “must hold within its folds organized Labor, the Soldier vote, the Jewish people, and the Negroes.” However, he was not specific about what this coalition meant other than to advocate, as he repeatedly did, that the party must pursue the general aim of preserving the “mass purchasing power” that the war economy had stimulated.<sup>89</sup> Beyond this, Lea left matters at the alliance of his so-called liberal elements. As he said in another document, it was vital to secure the “closest cooperation” between “those who toil” on farms and factories. Such cooperation would “raise higher the American standard of living.”<sup>90</sup>

The Tennessee Legion had to be more forthcoming. In 1953 the department issued a yearbook, twenty years after its first one. Like the 1933 volume, the book reported on the department’s year-by-year conventions, the activities of its different subgroups, and its general political positions. This time, however, the volume made a point to feature pictures of the African American posts and Auxiliary units. Moreover, the yearbook detailed that the Tennessee Legion had begun a separate Boys State to parallel the white version. As the compiler put it, the “Negro posts” sent a cadre of sixty-one young men to “their Boys’ State.” This notation came complete with a photograph of J. Lee White, the young man chosen to be governor at the “first Boys’ State for colored boys.”<sup>91</sup>

The racial gymnastics in this process are utterly fascinating. However, this yearbook recorded a significant change. During World War I, soldier Albert P. Smith had demonstrated how one young white southerner could merge modern industrial combat into the white South’s dance of race and gender privilege. It was the task of proper white men, he had said, to defend the civilization symbolized by pure white women, and

<sup>89</sup> Untitled typescript on the Democratic Party’s prospects, n.d. [ca. 1945], Lea Papers, reel 14, frames 000494–502 (quotations on 000494–95).

<sup>90</sup> “Digest of a Program for Enacting Certain Proposed Legislation and Financing a Membership Campaign,” Lea Papers, reel 14, frame 000504.

<sup>91</sup> Fred D. Estes, *History of American Legion Department of Tennessee, 1919–1953* (Nashville, 1953), 55 (first and second quotations), 195, 203, 208 (third quotation).

to do so whether the brutish antagonists wore spiked helmets or the working clothes of “the Negro.” In its 1953 volume the Tennessee Legion completely replaced this narrative. Although the Legionnaires were always on the lookout for enemies within the country, African American veterans and the kids trying out for “their Boys’ State” were not among them. Though segregated, they nonetheless also represented the values of active citizenship and the character of good citizens. Said another way, race, when isolated from the matrix of white woman’s privilege, could assume very new shapes and could be deployed in new ways.

The larger point is that the evolving interaction between World War I memory and Confederate history cautions us about using a persistent Lost Cause to sustain an argument that the twentieth-century South stood apart from national and international developments until the civil rights movement. The United Daughters of the Confederacy’s belligerent, vindictive Confederate memory indeed suggests an isolated and anachronistic white South.<sup>92</sup> However, Lea and the Legion’s evolving World War I memory points to something more complex: that the world war and Confederate memories were entwined in a dynamic relationship. For their part, Lea and the Legionnaires saw their war in terms of the need to engage with the modern industrial democratizing world, not to avoid it. Perpetual danger, if nothing else, necessitated this attention. For them, war memory pulled them ever deeper into industrial modernity, as the Depression intersected with the need for preparedness. Under this stimulus Lea and friends imagined a democratized citizenship based on universal duty and a materially based social compact worth the sacrifice to defend. In other words, the persistent memory of the world

<sup>92</sup> In his recent and (rightly) well-received study of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal Congress, Ira Katznelson argues that the white South’s support of the administration program typified the irony that the mid-twentieth-century triumph of liberalism hinged on cooperation with “illiberal elements.” By categorizing the South as one such “illiberal element,” Katznelson places the region and its politics in the same category as he does Stalin’s Soviet Union. Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York, 2013). In like spirit see Glenn Feldman, ed., *Nation Within a Nation: The American South and the Federal Government* (Gainesville, Fla., 2014). Of course, Confederate memory was adapted and used in many ways during this period. The UDC hardly had a monopoly on Lost Cause imagery. For example, for Andrew Nelson Lytle, the Confederate war represented the last stand of subsistence-based agrarianism against industrial imperialism. At Shiloh and Fort Donelson, Lytle said, “the long hunter’s rifle spoke defiance to the more accelerated Springfields,” but the result was the “triumph of industry, commerce, [and] trade,” which brought “misfortune to those who live on the land.” Andrew Nelson Lytle, “The Hind Tit,” in *Twelve Southerners, I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930; New York, 1962), 201–45 (quotations on 202). For his part, Allen Tate contrasted Stonewall Jackson’s old-world certainty against new-world doubt and skepticism. Singal, *War Within*, 240–45.

war forced changes in the understanding of war, gender, and political economy that the UDC, with its insistent glorification of gender stratification, could not match. World War I thus brought its white southern veterans fully into the twentieth century; Confederate memory had to adapt.



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