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OKLAHOMA AND WORLD WAR I: OVER HERE AND OVER THERE

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

The State of Oklahoma, one of the United States' newest states, entered the First World War, along with the rest of the nation in April 1917. This study elucidates the role of Oklahoma's participation in the United States Army during the period of World War I. From the already established Oklahoma National Guard unit, the Oklahoma 1st Infantry Regiment, derived from the former Oklahoma Territorial Army, to the thousands of Oklahoman draftees blended into the 90th Infantry Division in the National Army, Oklahoma sent over 90,000 men to fight overseas. This thesis explicates the role of Oklahoma's citizens' participation to provide the materials and services needed for the U.S. Army to operate, thereby supporting the Oklahoma doughboys.

Drawing on several manuscript collections at the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma, the Fort Sill Archives located in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, local Oklahoma newspapers, and other state newspapers and materials from the Oklahoma Historical Society, this study argues that World War I was a foundational moment in Oklahoma's early history. After the war, Oklahoma expanded its National Guard size by increasing its size to thousands instead of hundreds, and the military presence increased as the state allowed the construction of new installations. Almost five percent of Oklahoma's population joined the armed services during the war, but the post-war integration experience of the military did not improve the racial-climate state.

INTRODUCTION

On November 16, 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt issued Presidential Proclamation 780, formally admitting the twin territories, Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory, as a complete state within the union. Between 1907 and 1920, the new State of Oklahoma experienced a whirlwind of events that impacted its residents, communities, and politics. During this time, the state of Oklahoma would hardly be recognizable to present-day Oklahomans. Oklahoma's standing state National Guard was roughly one percent of the size of twenty-first century Oklahoma's Army National Guard rosters. Only the states of Montana, New Mexico, and Arizona had a smaller military than Oklahoma.[1]

In its origin, the newly founded State of Oklahoma was a combination of Indian territory and Americanized land. The Indian tribes with ownership of the Indian Territory still retained their control over that section of land after the convergence of the two territories into one federally recognized state. According to the thirteenth census, taken in 1910, three years after statehood, Oklahoma boasted an extremely diverse makeup of citizens. The State had a total population of 1,657,155 people, of which Whites accounted for 1,444,531 (87%) people, Blacks 137,612 (8%), American Indians 74,825 (5%) people, Chinese 139, and 48 Japanese people.[2] A total of 40,442 Oklahomans, a number equivalent to 2 percent, reported themselves of foreign birth.

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[1] United States Army War Department, Composition of the National Guard Divisions and Disposition of Former National Guard Units, taken from https://history.army.mil/curriculum/wwi/docs/AdditionalResources/Comp_of_Natl_Guard_Divisions_and_Disposition_of_Former_Natl_Guard_Units_1916.pdf, accessed on June 28, 2023.

[2] United States Census Bureau, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, taken from https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1913/dec/vol-1-population.html, accessed on February 2, 2023. No numbers are listed to make up any races or ethnicities not covered in the overall data.

In 1914, seven short years after Oklahoma officially became a recognized state within the Union, the world entered the most significant military conflict in its history. Across the Atlantic, Europe tore itself to pieces in the most extensive and deadliest military campaigns the world had ever seen. As a new state within a neutral country, Oklahoma's legislature faced its own internal introspection as news of the conflicts and power struggles in Europe spread. As soon as the United States declared war on Germany and the remainder of the Central Powers, the rise of pro-American, anti-immigrant, and anti-communist sentiments with rising racial tensions created intense conflict on the Oklahoma home front. To better prioritize industrial efforts towards the war effort and ensure order within the state, Oklahoma established Councils of Defense that encouraged citizens to root out and expose dissenters and German sympathizers, efforts which often led to violence between its citizens, even sometimes resulting in death.

Prior to the start of World War I, while being the largest racial group, White Oklahomans certainly did not share one homogenous culture. Large-scale conflicts occurred between the different ethnic groups lumped into the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of "White." While ethnic Germans had the highest concentration of foreign-born Whites in the state, other groups with sizable populations included foreign-born Irish, English, Poles, Russians, Russian Germans, and Russian Jews, along with established Black and Native communities. The established generational native White Oklahomans became more nervous by the presence of all these groups.[3] The public opinion to keep to your own identified community was commonplace. At the outbreak of the war in 1914 and on a greater scale after America's entrance into the conflict in 1917, German Oklahomans, both immigrant and non-immigrant families, found themselves

[3] Douglas Hale, "European Immigrants in Oklahoma: A Study," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 53, Number 2, Summer 1975, 188.

under constant threat of being attacked or having their homes vandalized because of suspicion that they harbored anti-American ideologies or opinions.[4] The anti-German sentiment was not restricted to Oklahoma. The sentiment occurred nationwide and was exacerbated by successful propaganda campaigns.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the participation of the 36th Infantry Division (Texas-Oklahoma National Guard Division) and draftees in the 90th Infantry Division first during the Army's mobilization period and then turn to the experiences of the soldiers in the European Theater of war, their return home to Oklahoma, and the efforts of the home front in supporting the war effort. Much of the ethnic makeup of Oklahoma's National Guard and the 90th Infantry Division, otherwise known as the Texas-Oklahoma Draftee Division, comprised soldiers of European and Native American origin. This study focuses strictly on Army service; sister services such as the Navy and Marines are not included.

While both Black American and Native American military stories are included in this narrative of both Oklahoma-populated divisions, this work is not intended to provide a thorough history of either group's experiences. This work only seeks to incorporate their stories within the framework of wartime Army service during the First World War. Sources authored by Black and Native American Oklahomans are utilized to tell a more complete story.

This study showcases the effect of World War I policies on all soldiers and highlights their experiences. Where White Oklahomans experienced selective service policies, Black and Native Oklahomans potentially had very different experiences because of the Jim Crow laws of the state and legislation surrounding the citizenship status of various groups. Regarding U.S.

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[4] Bilger, Edward. "The Oklahoma Vorwats: The Voice of German Americans in Oklahoma During World War I." *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 54, Number 2, Summer 1976.

Army service, Native American stories are intertwined with those of their White counterparts because of their integration into White units; the army did not segregate those two groups. Black Oklahomans, on the other hand, both draftees and volunteers, had very different experiences as a result of the racism and bigotry directed towards Black Americans. The military, not just the army, segregated Black service members from the White-Native units and placed them into all-Black divisions or all-Black units within the National Army. From the draft, training environments, overseas service, and reintegration back into the regular society, Oklahomans of every ethnicity had stories that make up a whole picture of Oklahoma's U.S. Army experience during the Great War.

As Oklahoma's soldiers and inducted servicemen shipped out to various camps and cantonments for training, the state began its own processes of doing what it thought best to aid the American war effort. Oklahoma Governor Robert L. Williams, at the recommendation of the National Council of Defense, created a State Council of Defense, which oversaw the development of County Councils. These councils had the authority to issue policies intended to assist in maintaining Oklahoma's infrastructure during the war, and they encouraged public calls for civic duty, military service, and formations of investigators to root out all those opposed to the support of the American war effort. While it seems Governor Williams's and the Oklahoma Councils of Defense policies never led to dramatic increases in Army enlistment, it did create and engender citizens of Oklahoma to participate in agricultural, industrial, and other campaigns to provide the material needed to aid the military as well as themselves.

Over the course of the war, Oklahoma's National Guard was transformed from consisting of only one regiment of Army soldiers to having several permanent regiments along with the headquarters of the newly established 45th Infantry Division; today, the division is known as the

45th Brigade Combat Team or BCT. Oklahoma saw abundant growth regarding expanding State and federal military presences within its boundaries.

The first chapter of this study discusses the draft process experienced by males in Oklahoma, the training of Oklahoma and Texas National Guardsmen, and Oklahoma draftees during the build-up phase of the American Expeditionary Forces at the beginning of World War I. It also covers the different demographic experiences of the initial drafting-volunteer processes and experiences in the training camps. Even with integrated White and Native units, each group saw the whole process through their own unique perspectives. Despite only having one regiment of National Guardsmen, the 1st Oklahoma Infantry Regiment, and the establishment of the Oklahoma-Texas Draftee Division, Oklahoma sent around 90,000 men overseas to combat German forces. As two of the first combat divisions in the American Expeditionary Forces, the 36th Infantry Division (ID) and 90th ID participated in some of the most brutal Allied assaults of the war. The 36th ID was an amalgamation of Texas and Oklahoma National Guard units that merged as part of a directive of the U.S. War Department to create larger units more quickly.

Infusing Texas and Oklahoma National Guard units and incoming draftees into multistate divisions was a new concept for the Army. This was done in an effort to break down regional barriers with the hopeful result of unifying soldiers from across the country as Americans rather than representatives of each soldier's respective home state. One result of this policy was the formation of the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the 36th ID. The 142nd was the combination of the 1st Oklahoma Infantry Regiment and the 7th Texas Infantry Regiment.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the 36th ID was the number of American Indians, both volunteers and draftees. When the division shipped overseas, it contained more than 600 of the roughly 12,000 American Indians in the entire American Expeditionary Forces. The high

concentration of Native Americans had a significant impact on the division's successes by facilitating quicker combat innovations regarding small unit tactics and creating a new encryption method for telephone communications utilizing multiple Native languages.

The 142nd Infantry Regiment not only contained a large number of American Indians, but it also contained several Native officers, most of whom came from the 1st Oklahoma: Captain Walter Veach, First Sergeant then Second Lieutenant Columbus Veach, Captain Charles H. Johnson, Captain Ben Davis Locke, and First Lieutenant Moses Bellmard.[5] The division also had an entire infantry company composed of dozens of men of Oklahoma Native American descent. However, because of the size of the Indigenous population in comparison to the ethnic and racial makeup of the rest of the U.S. Army, as well as the potential for racism regarding their service, most of their stories stayed within their individual tribal histories, along with corresponding unit histories. As a result of their service to the U.S., Native Americans who served received paths of immediate citizenship if desired amongst those men not already citizens. Because the military used Native languages as a means of communicating coded messages, portions of the Indigenous service to the Nation in wartime remained closely hidden from public record out of fear of needing to utilize similar methods in future conflicts, and the United States did so in the Second World War. For this reason, the American public has long lacked an understanding of the substantial impacts of American Indians who served in World War I outside of traditional combat roles. It was not until the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, after the U.S. Congress passed the Code Talker Recognition Act, HR 4544, that a more

[5]Lonnie J. White, *From Panther's to Arrowheads: The 36th (Texas-Oklahoma) Division in World War I* (Novato; Presidio Press, 1984), 10 and 44.

complete understanding of Native American participation in U.S. military campaigns became public and fully realized.[6]

While the 36th ID comprised mostly of volunteers, the 90th ID contained draftees from Texas and Oklahoma. This is where it got its region-derived nickname, the Texas-Oklahoma Draftee Division. The 90th ID had several hundred Native Americans from Oklahoma in its ranks as well. There is still some debate about which division truly had the most Native Americans, the 36th or the 90th. However, due to the scarcity of primary records accounting for exact racial and ethnic demographics of each of the divisions outside of personal accounts, the 36th ID is popularly accepted as the division with the most integrated Native Americans in the U.S. Army during World War I. The 90th ID was formed in a similar timeframe as the 36th ID, but as a National Army unit comprised of drafted men from Texas and Oklahoma, not an amalgamated National Guard force. [7]

As a result of their integration, Anglo-American and Native American soldiers had similar yet different experiences, while the army segregated African American Oklahomans into Black-only divisions or regiments. The systemic racism that permeated Oklahoma during World War I affected not only the drafting and volunteering processes of African American men but also led to increased tensions between White Oklahomans. As a result of the segregation of Black units and the assimilation of African American Oklahomans into units comprised of African Americans from all over the United States, their stories are blended in with the history of those units. This creates a problem when trying to compare the experiences of Black

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[6] Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008, Public Law, U.S. Congress, https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ420/PLAW-110publ420.pdf (accessed May 8th, 2020)
[7] Lonnie J. White, T*he 90th Division in World War I: The Texas-Oklahoma Draft Division in the Great War* (Sunflower University Press; 1997), 20.

Oklahomans who enlisted or those drafted by the Army with those of White Oklahomans. As a result of the systemic racism directed towards Black units, soldiers, and other servicemen from Oklahoma, tracing their own individual experiences is exponentially more difficult.

The second chapter discusses the frontline experiences of the 36th ID (Texas and Oklahoma), the 90th ID (Texas and Oklahoma Draftee Division), various stories of Oklahomans combat narratives related to the two Texas-Oklahoma Divisions (but not as members of those units), as well as several experiences of the major ethnic groups comprising these units. Both divisions participated in all significant engagements involving U.S. forces since August 1918. Arriving in France in the summer of 1918, the 36th ID was stripped of personnel to reinforce other American units needing replacements. The American Expeditionary Forces immediately separated the divisions from several of their specialized units, such as the field artillery regiments and engineer units, and distributed them to different organizations with gaps in those specialties near the frontlines. What remained of the 36th ID was then sent to the front to relieve a Marine Division. While in Europe, the 36th ID served more under European command than American command. General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), created his first American Army after the formation of the Texas-Oklahoma divisions. The 1st U.S. Army was not formed until after the Oklahomans had been in theater for several months. During the Meuse-Argonne, the most significant engagement fought by the US Army in the war, the 142nd Infantry and the rest of the 36th fell under the command of the French 4th Army, where they remained until their eventual redeployment back to the United States in the Spring of 1919.

While the 36th ID is the most renowned unit, the 90th ID arrived in France several weeks ahead of the 36th. Because of this, the 90th ID finished the last stages of their training in France

earlier and moved up to the front to participate in the St. Mihiel offensive. Then, like most of the AEF, the 90th supported the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Both the 90th and 36th Infantry Divisions housed many racial groups, making them an ethnically diverse contingent of the AEF. Aside from the amalgamation of Anglo-Americans from various groups, both divisions had hundreds of Native Americans within their ranks occupying positions at all levels, from privates to commanders. The Native Americans incorporated in this division originated from numerous tribes throughout Oklahoma and Texas. Their presence led these divisions, especially the 36th ID, into Oklahoma history and American legend. Using their Native languages for message encryption directly impacted the unit's success and would be utilized again during the Second World War.

This chapter also briefly covers the two National Army Infantry Divisions, the 92nd and 93rd, two all-Black divisions. Composed of regular army soldiers, draftees, national guardsmen, and volunteers, these units served as service support while also having some of the infantry regiments engage in actual combat against German forces. Their service was no less admirable regardless of whether it was a combat role or service support, as both functions are vital for the army's effectiveness.[8]

The third chapter discusses the Oklahoma home front and the various ways the state assisted the war effort. Oklahoma quickly started military instruction programs at its two most prominent universities: The University of Oklahoma (OU) in Norman and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Oklahoma A&M), now Oklahoma State University, located in Stillwater. Initially, students at the University of Oklahoma volunteered for these

[8] *Brief Histories of Divisions, U.S. Army 1917*-1918 (Washington D.C.; War Department, 1921), 84-86.

programs immediately following America's entrance into the war; it was made compulsory in late 1917 and continued until 1918. Oklahoma A&M already required all male students to participate in such programs as a result of conditions set forth by the 1862 Morrill Act.[9] The new program became officially known as the Student Army Training Corps (SATC). After the war ended, both schools continued their military instruction programs as part of the newly established Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). These universities ultimately sent hundreds of men to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, but not all those who participated in SATC programs received officer's commissions. The military reserved almost all Regular Army officer commissions for the federal service academies, such as the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and the United States Naval Academy located in Annapolis, Maryland. It was disheartening that the commission was not guaranteed, but the lack of evidence pinpointing students' thoughts on the matter presents a challenge in interpreting the situation. Both campuses had compulsory military education, physical education courses, drills, and ceremonies from the end of 1917 through the beginning of 1919.

Despite the mandatory military education prevalent at both universities, the retention of young men to fulfill home-front duties was seen as paramount for the continued success of Oklahoma. Aside from training young males for future service in the U.S. Army, the SATC programs attracted young men to undertake higher education with an incentive to study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses to ensure continued expertise in those vital skill areas. This type of incentivization also occurred at graduate colleges in medicine and law. While the universities began training students to go to war, the State established county-

[9] Act of July 2, 1862 (Morrill Act), Public Law 37-108, which established land grant colleges, 07/02/1862; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives.

driven Councils of Defense to spread patriotic messaging and encouragement and push propaganda from the U.S. Committee of Public Information (CPI).

While serving in the SATC programs was a way to receive financial benefits for the university, membership in the program was not always a guarantee of being inducted into the United States military. As part of the Selective Service Act of April 1917, any male student who had already registered for selective service was always at risk of being called to serve. When that situation arose, it was up to the University administration and president to determine whether that individual student needed to stay or if the selected student showed greater promise of serving the country now. While not an easy decision, it was one the university administration had to make in hundreds of individual cases, determining the fate of the State's young men and, consequently, the fate of the State itself.

As Oklahoma prepared for a state of war, the State legislature had recessed at the onset of America's entrance into the European conflict. With the encouragement of the federal government's newly established National Councils of Defense (NCD), each state and territory began forming its own State Councils of Defense (SCD). Robert Lee Williams, Oklahoma's third governor, immediately called for establishing an Oklahoma State Council of Defense (OSCD), with each county having its own local council that would report all its activity to the OSCD. The county councils received their authority from the state council. Since Governor Williams headed the state council and selected a handful of men to form the primary council positions, the authority was derived directly from the governor and with little Oklahoma state legislature oversight.[10] Before the onset of America's entrance into the Great War, the Oklahoma state

[10] Oklahoma State Council of Defense. Sooners in the War: Official Report of the Oklahoma State Council of Defense from May,' I9T7, to January 1, 1919, Containing the War Activities of

legislature recessed and could only be recalled by the governor through mandate. Governor Williams chose not to recall them, so they would not reconvene until 1919. This allowed Williams to centralize the government and issue policies pertaining to war work more quickly. Regardless of the controversial nature of Governor Williams's exclusion of the Oklahoma state representative, the actions taken by the councils of defense at all levels, both state and city, did not go without consequence after the war. The council reviewed its enacted policies during the war on the spectrum of public opinion; if the public approved of the action, then it was accepted as a legitimate policy.

During the war, Oklahoma citizens did what they could to assist in the war effort. The social and economic conditioning set forth by the Oklahoma and Federal Councils of National Defense utilized messaging and media to galvanize a workforce with a dual purpose at heart. The councils highly succeeded to that extent. One purpose of mobilizing the mechanical and agricultural industries at the start of the war was to create a massive increase in the output of weapons and ammunition and, most notably for Oklahoma, an increase in the production of cotton and food. More and more workplace advertisements went out to the women of Oklahoma to fill the ever-increasing labor shortages. Oklahoma City held massive drives during 1917-1918 to encourage women to volunteer to work in vital industrial roles that got hit with labor shortages following the initiation of the draft.[11] It was commonplace for women to be recruited into almost any industry since so many of those industries needed people to fill the workplace shortages. Many Oklahoma women did not need to be pushed but volunteered their services. Up until this period in American history, women participated in every conflict. For the state of Oklahoma,

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the State of Oklahoma. Edited by William T. Lampe, Oklahoma City. I (March 17, 1919). Stratton De. Brooks Collection, University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections.

[11] *The Record-Democrat, "Gov Calls for Volunteers," July 6, 1916.*

World War I was a tremendously progressive moment for women entering the workforce on an unprecedented scale.

Like the experiences of most societies in times of war, serious and violent mass protests broke out, acts of vigilantism, and labor union difficulties affected Oklahoma's ability to arm, mobilize, and support the war effort. The jingoism endorsed by the CPI and Oklahoma State Council of Defense had violent and, at times, deadly consequences for those citizens seen as un-American, including non-Whites and non-Oklahoma native-born Whites. In response to growing unrest, particularly in the Tulsa regions, volunteer militias formed, operating not in relation to the National Guard. They attempted to quell any form of considerable public dissent or uproar.[12] This study also intends to illustrate that World War I was a critical lessons-learned moment for Oklahoma. The war forced Oklahoma to adapt to meet and overcome significant events that affected every aspect of Oklahoma life. Oklahoma had to solve how to raise its military strength concurrently, quickly mobilize all National Guard troops, and integrate them into the national military. Oklahoma had to react to handling local government in a more centralized fashion, maintain the state's industries, and mobilize a massive labor force to replace those joining the military. While future events may overshadow the initial significance of the war, Oklahoma gained vital knowledge and practical experience in crisis response on a mass scale.

[12] *The Tulsa Tribune*, "Mob Rule," November 19, 1917, 7.

CHAPTER 1: PREPARING FOR WAR

As Oklahoma transitioned from a Territory to full statehood in 1907, the State's National Guard (NG), the 1st Oklahoma Infantry Regiment, the only non-federal army unit, was very small compared to the federal garrisons. However, the 1st Oklahoma was unique compared to the Regular Army, also regarded as the professional army, in that it was already an integrated unit of Anglo-Americans and Native Americans. The United States military had already standardized segregated military units. During the course of World War I, the bonds developed by the two ethnic groups would improve ethnic relations not just in the military but in Oklahoma's social life after the conclusion of the war. Unfortunately, several thousand Black Oklahomans who also served in the Great War would serve in segregated units, mainly in the Regular Army. The Oklahoma National Guard did not have all Black units at this time, and the loss of shared wartime experience leading to common understandings contributed to further problems after the war's conclusion. This disparity in experiences led to further resentment from the Black population. As the mixed unit joined with their Texas comrades during the build-up to the First World War, both groups utilized military tactics unique to their own upbringing and culture. This generated success for the Oklahomans on the European battlefield.

Before Oklahoma's confirmation into statehood, the United States executed its first international war against Spain's occupation of Cuba and, concurrently, the Philippine Islands in 1898. The Spanish-American War was the first conflict where the United States went to war as a national power against a foreign power on territory outside the continental states. This war demonstrated a shortcoming in coordinating state militias with federal forces into a combined and effective military organization. As a result of the government's inability to effectively coordinate with state militias, the United States Government devised a way to improve the

process of raising troops rapidly, which would affect Oklahoma directly. Under the Secretary of War Elihu Root's guidance to modernize the military, Congress passed the Dick Act in 1903. The act was signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt and named for Ohio Congressman Charles Dick, Chairman of the Militia House Committee. The Dick Act was a vital piece of legislation designed to hold the state militias (National Guard) to the same standards as the Regular Army (federal army).[13] This engendered cooperation between State and Federal forces to create a cohesive military that could fight in a combined arms manner. After the passage of the Dick Act, the state militias and the Regular Army began holding joint training exercises to prepare themselves for integrated operations in an actual conflict. It also paved the way for the federalization of the National Guard whenever called upon; thus, the National Guard had to have the same modern equipment and training expected in the Regular Army.

Prior to America's entrance into the Great War in 1914, Oklahoma got the chance to practice its own mobilization efforts with its Army National Guard. The United States came into conflict with Mexico in 1914 because of the Tampico Incident, where Mexico detained and arrested American Sailors picking up fuel in the Mexican port city of Tampico. The brief detention of the small group of U.S. sailors resulted in rising escalations after the U.S. admiralty demanded reparations for the event after Mexico returned the sailors only a few hours after being detained. On the recommendation of the admiralty of the US Navy, President Woodrow Wilson requested executive authority to employ the military against Mexico.[14] After the request was granted on August 20, 1914, the whole US Atlantic Fleet moved on Vera Cruz, including a

[13] Dickinson, John. *The Building of an Army: A Detailed Account of Legislation, Administration and Opinion in the United States, 1915-1920* (New York; The Century Company, 1922), 8.
[14] Ibid.

contingent of Marines who took physical control of the city.[15] The invasion of Mexico caused mass anti-U.S. sentiment across Latin America; however, enlistments increased in the U.S. Regular Army on an unprecedented scale. While recruitment was up on a national level, this patriotic zeal did not lead the Oklahoma National Guard to experience a surge in enlistments. The success of the invasion prompted Oklahoma's Native American population to enlist in the Regular Army at the same rate as their white counterparts.

After Secretary of War Elihu Root's reformations of the War Department, the United States was arguably on an improved path to creating a cohesive national defense strategy. The National Defense Act was ratified into law on June 3, 1916. The NDA provided four distinct classes of troops: the Regular Army, the National Guard, an enlisted reserve corps, and a volunteer army to be raised only in times of war.[16]

One of the main controversies of the National Defense Act was the metamorphosis of the state-controlled militias into the National Guard, which operates in a similar capacity today. These volunteer units would now held to the same standards as the Regular Army so that when the time came, they could quickly be federalized to assist in overseas military operations or extreme domestic incidents. Writing in the early 1920s, John Dickinson explained that just a few years after the war, "the broad purpose of the act was to build these troops into a citizen army forming a second line of defense behind the regulars."[17]

Despite the initial occupation of Vera Cruz having ended two years prior, the U.S. tensions with Mexico continued. In 1916, Pancho Villa and his men executed raids along the

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[15] Ibid, 8.
[16] U.S. Congress. *U.S. Statutes at Large, Volume 39 -1916, 64th Congress*. United States, - 1916, 1915. Periodical. https://www.loc.gov/item/llsl-v39/, 339-340.
[17] Dickinson, *The Building of an* Army, 37.

U.S.-Mexico border, with one raid resulting in fifteen American troops and civilian deaths and another nine wounded.[18] After sending a fully equipped army led by General John J. Pershing and a large contingent of American Regular soldiers to the U.S.-Mexico border, President Woodrow Wilson ordered the federal activation of several state National Guard units: Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas on May 16, 1916. Out of anticipation of becoming involved in the conflict, Oklahoma Governor Robert L. Williams issued a public call for seven to eight hundred volunteers to bring the current National Guard to full strength.[19] Governor Williams also wrote a letter to President Wilson, requesting the OKNG be federally activated and sent to assist General Pershing.[20] While Wilson initially denied his request, the OKNG would be activated some months later.

While Anglo-European descendants made up the large majority of the OKNG, Oklahoma had a high number of Native American soldiers, making up a significant portion of the 1st Oklahoma Infantry Regiment. Since previously being contested territory between the U.S. and Native Americans and located on the western frontier, Oklahoma had a long-standing cooperative military relationship with several of the Native peoples in the region. Before the contemporary military formed, the United States heavily relied upon Native Americans in every armed conflict. The U.S. military utilized Native scouts even before the Nation's founding. They served the federal government to find alternate expansion routes during the conquest of the Trans-Mississippi West, locating enemy footholds during times of war and engaging in myriad other tasks that benefited from this familiarity with the landscape. In earlier periods, Native

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[18] Donald E. Houston, *"*The Oklahoma National Guard on the Mexican Border," *Chronicles of Oklahoma: Vol. 53, Num. 4, Winter '75-'76*, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Historical Society, 447.
[19] *The Adair Citizen*, "Gov. Calls for Volunteers," July 6, 1916, 4.
[20] Houston, "The Oklahoma National Guard," 447.

Americans had volunteered to serve as scouts for numerous reasons. They saw the alliances with the Europeans as essential to their survival against rival tribes. To further illustrate their desire to cooperate with the U.S., many Native American men joined the U.S. Army to serve in a variety of roles, but primarily as scouts.

The 1866 "Act to Increase and Fix the Military Establishment of the United States of America" authorized the frontier army to recruit American Indians for scouting parties and additional combat operations.[21] The Osage Tribe in Oklahoma territory was an essential source of scouts for the Army, and this integration into the military solidified their security for a time. After the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, the U.S. relied heavily on Native scouts to help implement federal Indian pacification policies. Initially, it was established that Native scouts would be paid the same as U.S. cavalrymen to enable them to provide the opportunity to achieve security, honor, prestige amongst the tribe, wealth, and advantage over rival tribes.[22] In 1891, the War Department issued General Order Twenty-eight, allowing Native Americans to enlist in the professional army rather than serve in more than a scouting capacity.[23]

The largest Native American nations inhabiting the Oklahoma territory, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Muskogee, and Seminoles, fought in every American conflict up to the Great War, most recently under General Pershing during the previously discussed Southern Border Crisis, earning them the nickname "Pershing's Pets."[24] During this crisis, the United States executed another test of its military readiness to engage an enemy force on a national

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[21] Michael L. Tate "From Scout to Doughboy: The National Debate over Integrating American Indians into the Military, 1891-1918." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1986): 417–37. https://doi.org/10.2307/969017, 418.
[22] Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and at Home* (Phoenix; University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 11.
[23] Ibid, 18.
[24] Ibid, 38.

scale. Even after the successful military invasion against Mexico, the constant violent disturbances along the border continued because of Pancho Villa and his forces executing raids of Texas-Mexico border towns. To frustrate Villa's raids and with the intent to capture him, General John J. Pershing led an army known as the Punitive Expedition to the southern border. Due to Native Americans' familiarity with the border region, General Pershing created scouting units comprised entirely of Native Americans, many of whom came from the Five Tribes in Oklahoma.

In addition to the Oklahoma Army National Guard troops sent to assist at the border, the U.S. ordered the first military aviation assets housed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to mobilize at the U.S.-Mexico border and conduct reconnaissance missions for General Pershing and his ground forces. Captain Benjamin Foulois commanded the 1st Aero Squadron.[25] Utilizing the Curtis JN-3 biplanes, the squadron conducted several missions under General Pershing's command, providing successful reconnaissance in support of the Punitive Expedition ground assets; after returning to Fort Sill, the squadron trained on planes, balloons, and other aerial observation equipment. With the location of the U.S. Army's initial aviation assets and training facilities, Oklahoma could loosely be recognized as the birthplace of U.S. military aviation.

After several days of confusion about where to mobilize Oklahoma's National Guard, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker informed Governor Williams that the mobilization center would be in Chandler, Oklahoma, since the federal government already sent the supplies there for the Guard's use.[26] Eventually, the 1st Oklahoma Regiment was fully formed with 1,330 men

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[25] Ben Sherman, Fort Sill: Birthplace of Army Combat Aviation, https://www.army.mil/article/72212/fort_sill_birthplace_of_army_combat_aviation, accessed March 14, 2023.
[26] Ibid.

led by Colonel Roy Hoffman.[27] Hoffman would later command the 93rd ID, one of the all-Black divisions in the Great War. Starting in mid-July 1916, the OKNG embarked on their assigned posts along the southwest Texas border. By mid-August, the entire regiment was positioned along the border. After several months of executing joint war games with the army Regulars, minimal border patrols, and lots of training exercises, the entire Regiment was redeployed to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, by the end of February 1917. While the lackluster deployment and the chaotic activation disheartened those involved, the experience promptly showed state leadership how to improve their readiness for the subsequent mass activation and how to execute combined arms operations with Regular troops.

As Oklahoma service members, both Native Americans and Anglo-American troops, returned to Fort Sill for demobilization in February 1917, the newspapers across the state feverishly published news regarding rising tensions with Germany since Germany had restored its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic. War with Germany was creeping closer and, at this point, was seemingly inevitable. On February 8, 1917, the *Temple Tribune* reported that President Wilson issued a statement to all neutral parties regarding the war in Europe; the presently neutral parties had no choice but to restrict or ultimately cut off relations with Germany and Austria.[28] As war seemed unavoidable, the attitude of Oklahomans towards the prospect of war was generally negative. On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson broke the mandate that characterized his reelection campaign and formally requested that Congress declare a state of war with the belligerent powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

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[27] *The Record-Democrat*, "Gov Calls for Volunteers," July 6, 1916, 4.
[28] *Temple Tribune*, February 8, 1917.

In anticipation of the formal declaration from Congress, the 1st Oklahoma Infantry Regiment began gathering at Fort Sill in March and April 1917, only a month or two after redeploying from the Mexican border mission. At this time, the Oklahoma National Guard consisted of one infantry regiment, one cavalry troop, a headquarters element of engineers, and two medical companies.[29] With most of the soldiers who served in the unit during the Mexican Border campaign returned, the OKNG was one of the country's most experienced National Guard units. As the unit arrived at Fort Sill, a strict training regime began to develop the unit further and enhance its combat readiness.

While current Oklahoma National Guardsmen promptly converged to their respective units, they would not have enough men to impact national war efforts significantly. If there is anything that the Civil War and Spanish-American War showcased, it was that the rapid development of an army on a volunteer system has always led to failure and ended up requiring force to mobilize eligible participants into the U.S. military. World War I was not any different in that regard. In May 1917, the 65th U.S. Congress passed the Selective Service Act. Compulsory service was once again the key to raising as large a force as needed to fight on an international and modernized scale. Aside from merely forcing men ages eighteen to forty-five to register in the Selective Service System, the War Department did everything it could to mitigate the national disdain for mandating military service. According to a report in the *Edmond Sun* on July 19, 1917, the first national draft call compiled a list of 687,000 men.[30] Oklahoma would be responsible for drafting 15,564 men in the first draft alone for both National Army and National

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[29] Ben H. Chastaine, *Story of the 36th: Experiences of the 36th Division in World War I* (Pennsylvania: Pantianos Classics, 1920), 6.
[30] *The Edmond Sun*, 19 July 1917, "687,000 Men in First Draft Call.", 2.

Guard billets.[31] By the war's end, the aggregate number of draftees from Oklahoma would be almost 66,981 men and boys.[32] But as training began, the military called large numbers of personnel into service and started acquiring supplies to train, house, and equip the over 1,000,000-man army, including the Oklahoma units, which became a significant issue.[33]

Because of the multi-year struggle between the federal government and the steel industry, the United States did not have the weapons production or supply of weapons ready when America joined the European war. While the Springfield 1903 model became the standard issue rifle of the U.S. Army, most American troops that first arrived in Europe received modified British Enfield rifles because the American factories already had them manufactured for Britain during the period of America's "neutrality."[34] The same problem affected the artillery pieces as well. The U.S. adopted the French 75mm cannons and 155mm howitzers as the official artillery pieces for the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) on June 9, 1917. The U.S. armaments industry was also granted the licenses to build the French ammunition and artillery pieces but failed to provide a single piece before the war's end. The United States' seeming inability to arm itself and raise enough troops led both Britain and France to claim that the U.S. was a very "weak reed to lean upon." This is an interesting criticism by British General William Robertson since the U.S. was seemingly so poor at arming itself because the U.S. weapons industry was so

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Emmet J. Scott, *Scott's official history of the American Negro in the World War. A Complete and authentic narration, from official sources, of the participation of American soldiers of the Negro race in the World War for democracy…a full account of the war work organizations of colored men and women and other civilian activities, including the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A. and the War camp community service, with official summary of treaty of peace and League of Nations covenant*, (Chicago, Homewood Press, 1919), Pdf., 68.
[33] Finnegan, John Patrick. *Against the Specter of a Dragon* (Santa Barbara; ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1975), 189.
[34] Jennifer K. Keene, *The American Soldier* Experience (Connecticut; Greenwood Press, 2006), 16-17.

busy manufacturing weapons and munitions for the British and French militaries. The OKNG pressed on with what they had, but in early 1918, the 36th and 90th IDs would receive multiple weapons shipments, outfitting the unit with thousands of Model 1917 Enfield rifles, 30 machine guns, and 100 automatic rifles along with an abundance of ammunition.[35] As a consequence of the U.S. arsenals putting forth all their manpower and materials into making arms for foreign powers, the U.S. Army, including the upcoming National Army and National Guard Divisions, not just the Regular Army, wound up severely short on every type of weapon needed for their troops.

Upon hearing the news regarding the declaration of war, some groups of both White and Native Oklahomans quickly enlisted in the army and sister branches. However, portions of the population opposed intervention. The Native population had almost no hesitation in signing up to fight in the war because most fighting-age males had grown up within the Indian Boarding School system. It was typical for these schools to have militaristic training, discipline, and regular periods of indoctrination promulgating the United States' superiority, and this may have contributed to the high numbers of recruits coming from those institutions.

In a 1937 interview, Pete Cole, a Choctaw Indian who attended the Armstrong Academy for boys in Oklahoma, recounted the militaristic lifestyle enforced by the Academy. The students lived "under the instruction of military discipline; these boys were trained in, 'How to be a Soldier,' and then volunteered for service; after a short training at the camps, they were ready for the front 'Over There' and went to do their 'bit,' and 'Give until it hurt."[36] Cole seemingly joked

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[35] Lonnie J. White, *From Panthers to Arrowheads: The 36th (Texas-Oklahoma) Division in World War I* (Austin, Presidential Press, 1984), 64.
[36] Pete W. Cole, *Brief Sketch of old Armstrong Academy, A Government school for Indian Boys, destroyed by fire in 1921*, Manuscript, From the University of Oklahoma's Western History

that Uncle Sam's assimilation strategy with Native Americans succeeded to a point since young American Indian men volunteered for military service and matriculated into desegregated units.[37] Aside from the students of age eagerly enlisting in the U.S. military, the Academy was not short of staff members, with enlistees in the armed forces or returning veterans serving as instructors. This constant oscillation of Native men and American military life ensured a reliable and enthusiastic source of manpower from the Native boarding programs.

The Armstrong Academy reported that it had completed filling up its quota of men sent to the Army. The Choctaw Nation boarding school sent its whole baseball and track teams to the AEF, and these men volunteered; the army did not draft them.[38] Aside from the reasons Pete Cole had given for their ready and enthusiastic enlistment, there was also the prospect of achieving a more respectable position within society and potentially placing themselves in positions to bring attention to the rights the Native American community at large deserved. But Armstrong was only one academy among many such institutions designed to instigate a sense of Native dedication to the United States and not just towards Tribal rights.

Willie Kemble, a Ponca Indian out of Ponca City, Oklahoma, who attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, purported that in the early part of the twentieth century, over twenty thousand Native children resided in federal boarding schools. This mass, federally run education curriculum, forced on the Native population, existed as nothing less than federally mandated indoctrination.[39] According to Thomas Britten, a few of the most prominent boarding

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Collection, http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/cdm/ref/collection/indianpp/id/7900 (accessed May 8th, 2022).

[37] Ibid, 2.

[38] "The Oklahoma Guard Recruiting Fast," *The Ada Weekly News*, May 24, 1917.

[39] Susan Applegate Krouse, *North American Indian in the Great War* (Lincoln, the University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 24.

schools to send Native men to the military consisted of the Hampton Institute in Virginia, the Chiloco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma, the Haskell Institute in Kansas, the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, and the Phoenix Indian School in Arizona.[40]

While a good number of White and Native men espoused optimism about their wartime service, Black Oklahomans had more mixed feelings. While Oklahoma was not a slave-owning state, most residents had very negative views of its Black residents. Oklahoma Black disenfranchisement, along with the implementation of Jim Crow laws immediately following Oklahoma's ratification of statehood, initially disheartened those African Americans considering joining the military and led them to question if serving would benefit their families or Black Oklahomans as a whole. While differing opinions existed regarding wartime service in each Black-populated area within Oklahoma, the vision to serve as a means of gaining more favorable conditions for black American society continued to push individuals to serve.[41]

W.E.B. Du Bois wrote an article entitled "Close Ranks" in *Crisis*, the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People's official periodical. It called for black Americans to forget their grievances and to "close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens."[42] Over the course of the two-year draft period, 1917-1918, 5,694 Black Oklahomans, a combination of volunteers and draftees, served in the National Armies of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe.[43]

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[40] Britten, *American Indians in World War I*, 65.
[41] *The Black Dispatch*, "We'' Fight for the Flag: Freedom for All Forever," 4.
[42] Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2008), 34.
[43] Emmet J. Scott, *Scott's official history of the American Negro in the World War*, 69. https://www.loc.gov/item/19011646/. 68.

Under the first draft call for Black Americans, a couple of thousand Black Oklahomans received draft notifications on September 22, 1917. Around 3,000 African Americans trained at the cantonment Camp Sherman in Chillicothe, Ohio, along with Black draftees from Ohio.[44] On October 31st, 1917, *Harlow's Weekly* reported that 1,536 "negroes" had departed for Chillicothe, Ohio the previous Saturday. Over 1,000 people gathered at the Rock Island station to provide a proper send-off for those individuals boarding the train. In the same article, there was even a reprint of an editorial piece from the *Bartlesville Examiner* asking locals to dismiss any racial theories regarding the Black draftees and to gather to provide a proper send-off for those selected for service. In the editorial, the writer emphasizes, "Let's give them Godsend and an equal chance in the army-something we have failed to do in private life."[45]

Interestingly enough, the article from *Harlow's Weekly*, including their reprint of the *Bartlesville Examiner* editorial piece, stressed to the public the importance of a dignified sendoff, suggesting either an unconsciously or consciously more positive outlook towards the Black servicemen. *Harlow's Weekly* drew comparisons between the actions of White and Black draftees during their separate departure events. "The negro selectives were apparently more hilarious than the White selectives who have already gone to training stations." The *Examiner* provided a more paternalistic message geared toward their White audience, emphasizing that it was not the fault of the Black draftees for being in the United States or for being drafted. It was the White man who put them in this situation by bringing them to America in the first place. It is, therefore, White citizens' responsibility to see these men properly educated, trained, and led.[46]

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[44] Ibid, 73.
[45] "Negroes Leave for Training *Camp, Harlow's Weekly*, October 31, 1917, 5.
[46] *Harlow's Weekly*, 5.

When some African American men tried to enlist, some wanted infantry or at least a combat role, which allowed them to fight, but the recruiters provided them with alternate opportunities. The military created a soldier stevedore position targeted toward African American service members. In a scathing editorial in *The Black Dispatch*, the newspaper's representative annotated a conversation between himself and a recruiting officer in Oklahoma City. The officer stated that the stevedore regiments would be responsible for loading and unloading the ships and did not have to worry about combat. Most combat associated with African American soldiers was restricted to the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions.[47]

As a consequence of Oklahoma's segregation laws, a national incident occurred in the early months of 1918 regarding a Black army officer. First Lieutenant Chas A. Tribbett, a Yale graduate and recently commissioned junior army officer out of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, was traveling from his unit, the 357th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division (Texas-Oklahoma Division), by train on a federal assignment from Camp Upton, New York to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. According to Oklahoma City's *The Black Dispatch*, Tribbett's orders specified he was to receive aviation training at Fort Sill. When the train stopped in Chickasha, Oklahoma, the train was boarded by the Chief of the Chickasha Police Department, who proceeded to question why Lieutenant Tribbett was riding in the Pullman car of the train, informing the army officer that it was illegal in Oklahoma for a black individual to ride in such train cars.[48]

After informing Tribbett of the illegality of his actions, the Chief of Police arrested him; Tribbett offered no resistance. After a brief kangaroo court payment of twenty-five dollars in fines and bail, Lieutenant Tribbet was released to continue to Fort Sill and report to the

[47] "Stevedore Soldiers! What?," *The Black Dispatch*, September 21, 1917, 4.
[48] "Grady County Jails Black Lieutenant," *The Black Dispatch*, March 8, 1918, 1.

Commanding Officer as ordered. After the fact, Attorney Robert Fortune sent a telegram to Emmet J. Scott, the highest federal Black American administrator and the assistant to the Secretary of War. The telegram was intended to bring the case to the War Department regarding the humiliating treatment of a Black service member and U.S. Army officer. The letter also emphasized that the United States Supreme Court had already ruled that the railroads of Oklahoma must uphold the same conveniences and accommodations for Blacks as they do for Whites and that the victim was well within his rights to be in the car he was in.[49] Mr. Emmett J. Scott wrote after the war that Lieutenant Tribbett was unjustly arrested at a train stop near Chickasha, Oklahoma, en route to Fort Sill to begin aviation training because of perceived racial prejudice rather than an actual crime. The arrest was considered untenable and proceeded to be pushed to the Department of Justice for adjudication by the War Department. No ruling or judicial inquiry came from the incident, and the case was seemingly dropped.[50]

Regardless of the thoughts of the White leadership of the American Expeditionary Forces, especially General Pershing, who repudiated the Black units of the AEF and sent several Black units to French Commands to move them away from the rest of the AEF, many Black service members served bravely with courage and dignity, with many Black units serving with tremendous distinction. One Black Oklahoman received the Distinguished Service Cross, the U.S.'s second-highest award for valor. Hailing from Hennessey, Oklahoma, Private First-Class Robert M. Breckinridge of Company H, 365th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Infantry Division, awards citation read, "Although severely wounded in the leg from shell fire, Private Breckenridge, an automatic rifleman, continued in action, crawled forward for 100 yards to a position where he

[49] "McCain Speaks," *The Black Dispatch*, March 15, 1918, 1.
[50] Emmet J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War*, 114.

obtained a better field of fire, and assisted preventing an enemy party from taking a position on the company's flank. Despite his wound, Private Breckenridge continued to use his weapon with great courage and skill until he was killed by enemy machine gun fire."[51]

Nationally, more than 700,000 Black Americans registered by July 1917; less than 10 percent of the national population comprised 13 percent of the draftees.[52] While Oklahoma and other states had incorporated Jim Crow legislation and a series of other laws designed to maintain separation between white and black Americans, other states, such as Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New York, had more positive and eager support from Black American communities. This could be attributable to their history of being free states and not imposing serious race-based legislation. Moreover, the sizable populations of such **B**lack communities probably facilitated a more favorable outlook regarding wartime service. New York especially became famous after the Great War because of the Harlem Hellfighters, an all-Black regiment in the New York National Guard. As a result of the massive disenfranchisement, acute prejudice, and systemic segregation of Oklahoma's African American residents, they have never received the public accolades and positive recognition experienced by their comrades from other states. This only further increased the racial tensions within Oklahoma and contributed to minor outbreaks of violence in the immediate postwar era.[53]

During the draft process, most draft boards consisted of White representatives and focused on signing up White Oklahomans and functioned very efficiently. In contrast, many of the established draft boards had difficulty when it came to categorizing Native Americans

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[51] Scott, *American Negro in World* War, 181.
[52] Gail Buckley, *American Patriotism: The Story of Black in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York; Random House Inc., 2001), 165.
[53] "Write Legion: Negro Vets Voice Protest in Resolutions," *The Black Dispatch*, October 3, 1919, 1.

correctly. Many Native peoples resided on remote reservations where information was slow to reach. Many of the Natives inhabiting the reservations could only speak poor English if they could speak any at all, and most draft officials did not have experience with Native languages. Provost Marshal General Crowder and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells oversaw the implementation of draft registration. Crowder eventually placed the task on Sells and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. According to Thomas A. Britten, "because citizenship status determined whether or not Indian registerees could be drafted, the determination of Indian citizenship was a matter of life or death."[54]

The War Department wanted the draft boards to be constituted on the local level. Although it was a requirement for all men between the ages of 21 and 45, multiple deferments could be requested and applied, granting exemptions to wartime service. However, unlike previous drafts, the War Department denounced any blanket exemptions for anyone, regardless of what deferment they may have qualified for. They knew that blanket exemptions, nepotism, and societal status played a critical role in the riots resulting from conscription during the Civil War. Such exemptions include married men, disabled men, and industrial workers who received priority exemptions. As the draft claimed able-bodied men for service, other capable men stayed behind. Conscription itself not only screened out those seemingly incapable of military service, but it sorted out the people that the country needed to stay home to keep the economy operating as it should. No assignment was officially any less honorable, but for some, there would always be a cloud over those who did not go overseas.[55]

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[54] Britten, *American Indians*, 54.
[55] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2004), 57.

Whether intentionally or not, the draft brought to focus the issue of defining citizenship within the Native American Nations. In 1917, the number of Oklahoma Native American males holding U.S. citizenship constituted nearly two-thirds of the total male population.[56] However, the issue of Native American citizenship was a problem during the decade before the Great War. In the 1880s and 1890s, the U.S. government passed the General Allotment Act and the subsequent Curtis Act, dividing Indian Territory into neat allotments of 40-120 acres. Any Native American who sought and received a deed for an allotment of land also accepted U.S. citizenship as a condition. Conscription legislation put forth and executed by the federal government and the local draft boards led to the creation of identification cards an individual received after successfully registering for Selective Service. This identification card was the first federally issued state identity document in the country's history.[57] This had a profound effect on the Native population, both naturalized citizens and those holding non-citizen status. Native American males who found themselves having to register for selective service, which in Oklahoma was the majority of Native American males, received draft cards that had to always be on their person. A problem that arose again surrounding the draft boards on the Reservations was that they failed to distinguish between those holding citizenship and those not holding citizenship.[58] This resulted in more Native Americans being registered for selective service, with over fifty percent of those registered receiving draft notices. To be precise, the military drafted around 6,500 Indians from the 11,800 registered men; this was twice the overall selection rate.[59]

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[56] William C. Meadows, *The First Code Talkers: Native American Communicators in World War I* (University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, 2021), 13.
[57] Christopher Capozzola. "The Legacies of Citizenship," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4 (2014), 11.
[58] John W. Chambers, *To Raise an Army* (New York; The Free Press, 1987), 231.
[59] Ibid.

Once a draftee was selected and a volunteer enlisted, they moved to one of the many hastily constructed training camps nationwide.

A letter from Tobin Wo-ok-Sook and Willie Ahdosy, members of the Kiowa Agency of Oklahoma, encouraged not only the duty of males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register for the draft but emphasized that it is the standing law that any "citizen" or individual "seeking" citizenship has to register.[60] Despite the Agency's efforts to normalize the aforementioned process, it would remain controversial. Many Native Nations of Oklahoma viewed it as a rite of passage and privilege; others maintained that it did not benefit Native peoples. In a later meeting held by E.B. Merrit, the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, on September 11th, 1917, Mr. Adhosy and Mr. Wo-ok-sook continued to speak as representatives of the Oklahoma Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa tribes. Mr. Ahdosy explained to Mr. Merrti, "They sent me here to say that if anything should happen here in the United States, they were willing to stand by the Government and fight for our country."[61]

The Oklahoma media frequently published news on the patriotism espoused by male members of the Oklahoma Native American tribes as they eagerly volunteered or registered for selective service. The idea of conscription did not thrill some Native groups. In August 1917, a group of Seminoles, Creeks, and other non-Native opponents to conscription, including large numbers of farmers, engaged in an anti-draft riot, later known as the Green Corn Rebellion.[62]

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[60] Tobin Wo-ok-Sook and Willie Ahdosy, Indian Pioneer Papers, University of Oklahoma, Western History collection. 1918.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Erik M. Zizzu "Conscription, Sovereignty, and Land: American Indian Resistance during World War I." *Pacific Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (1995): 537–66. https://doi.org/10.2307/3640557, 549.

Out of fear of promoting dissent and causing further transgressions, the media worked to bury the story of the uprising.[63]

While African American troops fought in segregated units, Native American troops found themselves integrated into White units. The integration of whites and Native Americans resulted in a torrent of mixed opinions from military and government officials. Native tribes also had a variety of opinions regarding integrated units. Those in favor of integrated units saw segregation as an indication that America did not view Native Americans as full-fledged Americans compared to White troops. Integrationists viewed individuals in favor of segregated units as insinuating the inferiority of Native Americans to Whites and, therefore, needed to maintain separation to not taint the "true" Americans. Eventually, the military decided not to segregate Native and Euro-American service members. The root cause of this decision was the fear that ethnically split units would cause cultural fragmentation that reinforced differences rather than encouraging units to see themselves only as Americans.[64]

Another argument for the integration of Native and White troops was the process of assimilating Native Americans into Anglo-American culture. In other words, to facilitate the cultural genocide of Native populations in favor of what the government viewed as the correct culture. Early in the twentieth century, the American public was fond of the "Vanishing Race" myth surrounding American Indian populations. The Vanishing Race myth revolved around the idea or concern that due to forced assimilation, American Indians would ultimately lose their culture, their racial identity, and their sense of self. The boarding schools and reeducation programs furthered the process of assimilation and led credence to the argument. Mass media

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[63] James R. Green, *Grass Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest 1895-943* (Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 361.
[64] Chambers, *To Raise an Army*, 171.

propagated this myth, and as far as the general American public was concerned, the only "real" Indians were "pureblood," and they were in immediate danger of losing their ethnic identities. Between 1911 and the United States' entrance into the war in 1917, several newspapers, such as the *Daily Oklahoman*, *Luther's Register*, and *Harlow's* Weekly, referenced Native Americans as the "Vanishing Race." This mythic notion prompted the federal government to implement more policies for the preservation of Indian culture.[65] By the end of the war, this belief was not as widely accepted and, at times, was rejected by the public. The War Department concluded that integration, with the endorsement from Cato Sells and the BIA, was the way forward regardless of the intent.

While training at Fort Sill, the OKNG was responsible for constructing Camp Doniphan. Doniphan would serve as the primary training camp for those units preparing for the war at Fort Sill. While the OKNG initially trained there, they would eventually transition to Camp Bowie outside Fort Worth, Texas. The 35th Infantry Division, composed of Kansas and Missouri National Guard units, would be the primary units to occupy and train at Camp Doniphan. Future President of the United States, Captain Harry S. Truman, was among the soldiers that made up the 35th ID training on Doniphan. Spanning roughly 2,000 acres, the tent city was positioned in a horseshoe arrangement, which provided a classroom-type atmosphere. Ward Schrantz recalled the lengthy marches and brutal conditions their British and French advisors forced on them. Like most visitors to Oklahoma, members of the 35th complained about the weather. Lieutenant Warren Perry stated that the wind "is blowing constantly and at such a rate that the dust and sand move in clouds."[66] Once winter arrived, the soldiers reported they would likely freeze to death if

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[65] Britten, *American Indians*, 30.
[66] Ward Schrantz, *A Machine-Gunner in France* (Denton; University of North Texas Press, 2019), 40.

they walked more than a handful of feet from their stove. However, the weather would be the least of their problems during their stay at Doniphan.

As was customary for hastily built training installations and the dense concentration of thousands of people, disease began to affect the troops. In December 1917, a measles outbreak began to wreak havoc amongst the members of the 35th. Several members of the division succumbed to complications resulting from measles. It was not uncommon to watch soldiers pass away from pneumonia and diphtheria brought on through secondary infections. Despite the complications from a variety of diseases, the 35 Infantry Divisions completed their necessary training at Camp Doniphan. The 35th Infantry Division began transitioning from Oklahoma to Europe in March 1918.

While the 35th ID toiled away at Camp Doniphan in Fort Sill, the Oklahoma National Guard arrived at Camp Bowie, Texas, in August of 1917 to merge with parts of the Texas National Guard, forming the 36th Infantry Division. Like Camp Doniphan, the soldiers lived in floorless pyramidal tents. Like most army enterprises, the Army did not provide the service members with any provisions until there was a requirement for it. For example, it did not provide the service members with stoves until it was frequently cold and did not deliver lights until later in the year..[67]

As the 36th Division continued to increase in drafted personnel during its stay at Camp Bowie, soldiers began to acclimatize themselves to the increasingly diverse group of Americans in the unit. As men started filtering into the dozens of traditional army training institutions, they integrated with people of multiple ethnic, class, and economic backgrounds. While it was common for the Army to create region-based units to generate better unit cohesion from the

[67] Chastain, *Story of the 36th*, 11.

shared experience of the composition of soldiers, it slowly abandoned this principle to meet the demand for more units.[68] This quickly established a National Army that was national in character rather than just administrative structures. That is, the Army wanted its soldiers to see themselves as Americans rather than Texas, Native Americans, Oklahomans, or ethnic Americans.

With the Oklahoma National Guard service members comprising part of the 36th ID, the draftees from Oklahoma filled up the billets in a new National Army division, the 90th Infantry Division. The 90th ID also found themselves training in Texas, but they built and trained at Camp Travis outside of Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. The War Department officially established Camp Travis and Camp Bowie on the same day, June 11, 1917. Like the 36 ID, the 90 ID would also hold the nickname Texas-Oklahoma Division since the division was primarily comprised of draftees from Texas and Oklahoma.[69]

The culture shock that derived from these changes led soldiers of the same regional background, ethnic group, or class to separate themselves from other groups and only congregate with those of similar characteristics. The stress and lethality of the battlefield would quickly wash away soldiers' stereotyped opinions of those who served with them. The only thing that eventually mattered would be each soldier's ability to put their life in the hands of those around them and for their comrades to do the same with them. Nonetheless, Jennifer Keene explains that "old stock" soldiers saw themselves as the truest of Americans and "attached derogatory labels to various ethnic groups…."[70] It was not uncommon for slurs such as dagoes, wops, honkies, or

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[68] Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Maryland; The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 30.
[69] White, *The 90th Infantry Division*, 5.
[70] Keene, *Doughboys*, 33.

guineas to be casually used by Anglo-Americans in reference to their fellow soldiers. Throughout the entirety of the war, morale officers continuously fought a never-ceasing effort to stamp out the use of ethnic slurs.

A majority of the Oklahoma Native American servicemembers coming out of Oklahoma served in the 142nd Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Alfred W. Bloor, 36th Infantry Division. Col. Bloor took command of the merged Texas and Oklahoma 142nd in October 1917.[71] As the troops trained at Camp Bowie during 1917 and early 1918, there was a recorded 89 Choctaws, 68 Cherokees, 15 Chickasaws, 7 Osages, 7 Creeks, 6 Seminoles, 5 Delawares, 2 Shawnees, 2 Quapaws, 2 Poncas, 2 Caddos, 1 Peioria, 1 Arapaho, and 1 Cheyenne.[72] Of course, the division reported these numbers from their roster taken in November 1917, and they may have fluctuated over the next several months. By the time the 36th ID moved to Europe, it had several hundred additional American Indian draftees and volunteers assigned to the unit. The 36th Infantry Division went to Europe with over five hundred Indigenous Americans from dozens of tribes, making the unit one of the most ethnically diverse National Guard units in the United States Army. Claiming hundreds of Native American troops as well, the 90th ID's largest Native groups consisted of Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks.[73]

The 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th ID, contained most Native Americans in the division. As a result, a complete company of only Native peoples was created and consisted of personnel from more than 14 different tribal nations.[74] This close quartering of Native troops undoubtedly led to unique tactical and strategic developments. While not all Native American tribes had a

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[71] *The Daily Oklahoman*, "First Oklahoma Loses Identity," 16 Oct 1917, 8.
[72] Meadows, *The First Code Talkers,* 47.
[73] White, The *90th Infantry Division*, 71.
[74] Chastaine, *Story of the36th*, 14.

warrior past, those that did contain historically developed warrior castes retained that culture as a profound part of their identity, showing their loyalty to America. Native military tactics would merge and adapt to the situations in Europe, which facilitated the 36th ID's effectiveness against the Germans.

An article in the *Star-Telegram* described the 36th ID as a vast melting pot of numerous nationalities.[75] The division included French, Italian, German, Polish, Danish, Filipino, Assyrian, Indian, Mexican, Chinese, Turkish, Bohemian, and Oklahoma Indians.[76] As different as each group was, it was not their task to learn the skills necessary to become soldiers willing to put their lives in the hands of those from different backgrounds.

Aside from the trials of camp life, the service members "faced more rigorous and more complete medical examinations than ever before."[77] Learning from the Spanish-American War's disastrous troop health standards and conditions, the military focused on building a healthier fighting force. This included directing the administration of vaccinations with a focus on mosquito abatement.[78] One of the most massive health initiatives for the U.S. military, especially in the training camps, was combating venereal disease (VD). According to the War Department, there is nothing more costly for the military than a soldier's ineffectiveness because of VD infections. The reason any disease, VD especially, was a massive problem or risk for the US military at home and overseas was that, depending on the disease, it could incapacitate any number of soldiers for extended periods of time. Men taken out of circulation and training

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[75] This remarkable level of diversity was seemingly uncommon, even for regionally locked divisions. Limited sources have been found to identify the exact ethnic makeup of the 36th Infantry Division outside of generalized whites and Native Americans.
[76] White, *Panthers to Arrowheads*, 43.
[77] Nancy K. Bristow, *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2012), 34.
[78] Bristow, *American Pandemic*, 34.

because of VD would cost lives, especially with highly technical jobs such as working as a member of an artillery crew, machine-gun team, or mortar crew. If any one man in those teams goes down, that group would then be combat-ineffective, thus adding to potential casualties.

To combat the sexual promiscuity and immorality facing the soldiers in the training camps, President Wilson authorized the creation of the Commission on Training-Camp Activities (CTCA) in April 1917, organized under Raymond B. Fosdick, an "expert" in police science.[79] This epidemic seemingly went against the military's marketing of the idyllic service member. "If Soldiers were defending womanhood from sexual predators, they could hardly prey on girls around the camps or in France."[80] The CTCA created a moral curriculum that became mandatory for all service members to be educated in. The overall purpose of this was to provide alternative means of entertainment and "create a morally pure army."

Andrew Huebner's *Love and Death in the Great War* utilizes personal correspondence to give voice to the actual people experiencing these circumstances. The fight against venereal disease followed the American Expeditionary Forces across the ocean to Europe and the front lines. General John Pershing was a staunch defender of sexual education for the troops in the AEF. According to Huebner, General Pershing "called first for educational lectures and bi-monthly inspections."[81]Eventually, propaganda would be distributed among the troops to further discourage the soldiers from engaging in sexually promiscuous acts.

While it is reported that there was an extensive push to fight immorality, the evidence of discussions amongst the soldiers themselves is limited. While the YMCA was present at both

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[79] Dickinson, *The Building of an Army*, 214.
[80] Andrew Huebner, *Love and Death in the Great War (*New York; Oxford University Press, 2018), 60.
[81] Huebner, *Love and Death*, 90.

Camp Doniphan and Camp Bowie, the letters sent by soldiers and published memoirs either do not discuss camp activities outside of training or touch on the matter only briefly.[82]

Despite the combined Texas and Oklahoma National Guard units, the division did not contain enough men to meet the unit's required wartime strength. The Army sent thousands of men from the first draft to Camp Bowie to fill the gaps. However, as a preventative measure inspired by the Health Department, a second camp was constructed to house the incoming draftees. The soldiers referred to these as detention camps. The camps' purpose was to house the 5,000 draftees sent to Camp Bowie during their first two weeks of vaccinations, medical examinations, and initial training. To ensure no "detainees" integrated with the division too early, a 10-foot wire fence separated the two camps. This quarantine was intended to prevent potential diseases or infections from disrupting division training.[83]

In large part, due to the unconventional tactics implemented by its Native American service members, the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division's training was overseen by representatives of General Headquarters American Expeditionary Forces to evaluate the unit on its unique effectiveness to maneuver across rough terrain.[84] The maneuver elements of the 142nd IR trained themselves to utilize the natural environment and terrain to their advantage outside the regular Division tactics instructions. Using trenches, shell craters, and elevation differences in order to increase the unit's ability to remain out of sight of the enemy while still continuing to make ground proved an invaluable technique that would further explain the 142nd's considerable success on the European battlefields. Much of this type of training is still contemporarily used by

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[82] Whether this was because both camps remained more isolated than others and located in less populated regions of the country is challenging to extrapolate from available sources.
[83] Rex F. Harlow, *Trail of the 61st: A History of the 61st Field Artillery Brigade During the World War, 1917-1919* (Oklahoma City; Harlow Publishing Company, 1919), 20.
[84] Meadows, *Code Talkers*, 52.

the U.S. military to teach success in small maneuver units. It was this type of recognition from superiors during training and preconceived stereotypes about Native American warrior prowess that led to more Natives serving as scouts, patrol leaders, and line runners, ultimately resulting in higher numbers of men killed in action or wounded.[85]

One aspect of World War I tactics was the necessity for coordinated and prolonged artillery strikes on specific targets. When the artillery had softened up the enemy trenches with voluminous artillery barrages, the infantry would begin their advance on the enemy forces with the expectation of a creeping barrage, artillery fire that moves forward with the infantry and supporting units to provide cover, enabling the most significant number of friendly troops possible to reach the opposing trench and remain combat effective. Without this combined arms effort, a mass assault on any fortified location would surely be doomed to catastrophic failure, resulting in high numbers of casualties. This is training that was seemingly nonexistent or, at least, minimally rehearsed. This massive lack of training would later lead to severe casualties among the Oklahoma units once in Europe.

In October 1917, only a month or so into 36 ID's training, the artillery brigade contained only approximately four artillery pieces.[86] For most of their training, the artillery units in the 36th ID lacked the essential equipment needed to train as artillerymen: artillery, horses to pull the artillery, and wheeled material to move the artillery. While studying artillery theory, they continued to train on basic soldiers' tasks and battle drills. It was not until February 1918 that the 61st Artillery Brigade received the necessary cannons and shells to train.[87]

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[85] "National Archives NextGen Catalog." n.d. Catalog.archives.gov. Accessed March 15, 2023. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/34392177?objectPage=3.
[86] White, *From Panthers to Arrowheads*, 55.
[87] Harlow, *Trail of the 61st*, 32.

Similar to the 35th ID at Camp Doniphan, Camp Bowie and Camp Travis experienced their own disease outbreaks. In October 1917 and into December 1917, Camp Bowie had numerous cases of influenza, diphtheria, and cases of pneumonia. Sergeant Woodyard of the 131st Artillery Regiment commented: "that every man in the 61st brigade was stricken with one malady or another."[88] Fortunately, most men stationed at Camp Bowie had light cases. As with Camp Doniphan, the crowded living conditions, inadequate clothing, and excessive training caused the rapid spread of these diseases.

On July 3, 1918, the 36th Division began its transition from Camp Bowie to Camp Mills, located in Long Island, New York.[89] While much of the Division arrived at Long Island, the 143rd Infantry Regiment was sent to the debarkation port of Newport News, Virginia. Later that month, the soldiers loaded themselves onto the transport ships and sailed to France. During this time, the unit could claim they saw their first "action" of the war through naval combat. According to Captain Benjamin Chastaine, submarines attacked the convoy carrying the division on three separate occasions.[90] Eventually, the division arrived in France at the end of July 1918. After the consolidation of troops over the period of several months, the soldiers of the 36th Infantry Division embarked on a march to the front in early October. As the men of the 36th ID continued their voyage from the United States to the shores of France, the 90th Infantry Division had arrived at the French ports in force by July 17, 1918.[91] After leaving in June, the 90th had a relatively easy and uneventful journey to the front.

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[88] Ibid, 30.
[89] Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th*, 20.
[90] Ibid, 22.
[91] *Brief Histories of Divisions, U.S. Army 1917*-1918 (Washington D.C.; War Department, 1921), 79.

The Army forces men from all corners of Oklahoma and Texas to unite because of the United States' call for troops. As the men of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 143rd Infantry Regiment, and the 61st Artillery Brigade, along with the rest of the 36th Infantry Division, trained to go to war, the shared experiences proved vital to their future success. During the course of their year of training from the Summer of 1917 to the Spring of 1918, the men of the 36 ID and 90 ID faced numerous challenges. However, while Native and White troops displayed instances of camaraderie that played a vital role during the conflict; the lessons learned from their military experience did not transfer to the broader Oklahoma society.

Oklahoma's National Guard and draftee divisions had already established themselves as a multiethnic fighting force at the start of World War I, but with the incorporation of Texas National Guardsmen and Oklahoma draftees, many ethnicities came together to accomplish a common goal and had a profound effect on how the soldiers would count on each other during the conflict. However, the variety of ethnicities and cultures within the Oklahoma-populated units was relegated to the multitude of European, Latin, and Native American cultures. Unfortunately, this integration did not include members of Oklahoma's African American population who fought in the war. These organizations would not integrate until the Korean War, more than 30 years later. Both the 90th ID and 36th ID had to build working relationships between all Anglo and Native ethnic groups internal to each unit to ensure success. Each soldier within these units was putting their life in everyone else's hands, regardless of the origin of their birth. Oklahoma seemingly had a higher rate of Native American participation in the U.S. Army than the nearby states of Arizona, and New Mexico, and another heavily Native state, Montana. This

attributable, in part, to the respective scales of draft volume. The other states drafted less than 20,000 personnel each compared to Oklahoma's staggering 76,000.[92]

After both National Guard and draftees departed the country, on their way to stick it to the Kaiser, the Oklahoma media continued to report on the heroism and courage displayed by both Oklahoma heavy divisions. Unfortunately, it would be left to the Black Oklahoman-owned newspapers such as *The Black* Dispatch, the *Oklahoma Guide*, and the *Tulsa Daily Star* to report on Oklahoma's native Black sons' activities. Because of the disparity between the Black Oklahoma servicemen and the integrated units, most of the Black-centric histories are left untold, leaving a gap in the historical record of Oklahoma's World War I experience. Even then, it was the 36th Infantry Division that received most of the media attention; the 90th ID was reported on less frequently than its National Guard counterpart. This could possibly be attributed to the 90th ID being a National Army division filled with draftees rather than the National Guard Division, which was comprised of Oklahoma's volunteers, along with a few interdivisional transfer draftees from the 90th to fill the ranks.[93]

By the war's end, Oklahoma was 16th of 52 states and territories impacted by the Selective Service Act. Oklahoma made up 2.2% (76,000) of the total drafted men in the U.S. Army, a total of 3,441,00. Those numbers include Oklahomans who eventually found themselves overseas and those who had not even shipped out for training.[94] Oklahoma had a much larger drafted force than its adjoining states of New Mexico (12,000 troops) and Arizona (10,000

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[92] *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1913-1918* (Washington D.C.; War Department, 1917), 15.
[93] White, *The 90th Infantry Division*, 33.
[94] The differences in reported numbers of Oklahomans who volunteered, those drafted, fought overseas, or never went, make it difficult to find exact numbers.

troops).[95] Only three states drafted over 200,000 men: New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. The Selective Service Act also impacted the territories of Alaska, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. It is reported that the Army drafted more men from the midwestern and mountain regions than from other regions of the United States. But it must also be explained that the more populous eastern states proportionately had more men registered for the draft, but the War Department split them into several regions. Meaning one region was the northeastern states and the southeastern states another, and so on.[96] Moreover, with tens of thousands of working-age males, over such a short period of time, removed from the workforce, Oklahoma had to move quickly to not only maintain the industries essential for maintaining the state's economic output but to increase in various industries, agriculture, to meet the needs of a nation at war.

As the standing army grew, so too did the need for more training on artillery systems grow. The long-range artillery technology advanced over the next few decades, forcing the US Army's capabilities to adapt. Fort Sill, which housed the School of Fire, would slowly increase in both size and population in the post-war years. Both the Field Artillery and Air Defense Artillery schoolhouses, now located at Fort Sill, established the Fires Center of Excellence. Fort Sill, Oklahoma, remains the central location where all U.S. military personnel are trained on both Field Artillery and Air Defense systems. Fort Sill, a remnant of American Western expansion, is not the only active military installation in the state. Oklahoma is now home to Tinker Air Force Base, established in 1941, Altus Air Force Base (1943), Vance Air Force Base (1942), the Coast Guard Institute (1919), and the Container Inspection Training Installation (1994). The beginning of Oklahoma's more positive attitude towards its service members and their accomplishments

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[95] *Annual Report of the Secretary of War 1913-1918* (Washington D.C.; War Department, 1917), 15.
[96] Ibid.

can be traced to its participation as a stakeholder in the United States' first major international war.

CHAPTER 2: OKLAHOMANS ON THE WAR FRONT

Come the summer of 1918, after only a year of training, the two Texas-Oklahoma divisions, one National Guard and the other comprised of draftees and part of the newly formed National Army, found themselves on their way to war-torn Europe, joining in the bloody crusade against Germany. The 36th Infantry Division was split between Camp Mills in Long Island, New York, and Newport News, Virginia, and began its transition from the continental United States to the shores of France. While the 36th ID still sailed towards the French ports of entry at Brest, the 90th ID arrived in Le Havre, France, in July 1918, several weeks before the 36th ID.[97] This allowed the 90th ID to enter the training areas around Bordeaux, France, sooner than their sister division. There, they received further training in marksmanship, trench warfare, and joint maneuvers with Allied forces. The 36th ID is the most well-known and reported-on unit from Oklahoma during the Great War, but it was the 90th ID that was the first significant infantry division comprised of several infantry regiments of Oklahomans to engage with the enemy. The 36th and 90th Infantry Regiments participated in every significant conflict utilizing American forces for the next ten months.

On August 12, 1918, the Oklahomans and Texans of the 36th ID disembarked their ships at Brest. Since the division occupied numerous transport ships, not all soldiers went ashore at the same time. Much like the languid boarding of the ships in Long Island, New York, which took days, the disembarkation in France was no different.[98] However, much of the division made

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[97] Lonnie J. White, *The 90th Division in World War I: The Texas-Oklahoma Draft Division in the Great War* (Sunflower University Press; 1997), 75.
[98] Rex F. Harlow, *Trail of the 61st: A History of the 61st Field Artillery Brigade During the World War 1917—1919* (United Kingdom; Harlow Publishing Company, 1919), 87.

footfall in Brest. This was the start of the splitting up of divisional integrity. Some units, such as the sanitary groups, went ashore at Bordeaux and Saint Nazaire.[99]

During their time at Brest, many soldiers replaced their romantic visions of war, if they had any, with the cold reality of occupying territory in an active theater of war. Brest had some of the worst conditions the division had experienced thus far in their time training for war. The shoddily constructed camps past the ports, and much of the camp was still under general construction. To make matters worse, the division was beginning to fracture further; the 61st Field Artillery Brigade, Private Rex Harlow's unit, the 11th Trench Mortar Battery, a subordinate mortar unit, and much of the ammunition loaded trains headed for Redon, France, to support other Allied sectors. Like the 36th ID, the 90th ID had its artillery, mortar, and transportation assets moved to an adjacent training area supporting French forces.[100] The detached units did not reunite until the end of the war.[101] To the soldiers in the unit, this was quite a scandal. However, it was not a unique circumstance only experienced by the Texas and Oklahoma Divisions. Units went to the locations where their individual skill sets would prove the most effective at causing the most significant enemy casualties and maintaining Allied dominance in as many sectors as possible.

After being in France for several weeks and continuing to train while awaiting orders to the front, the 36th IDs wait finally ended. Along their march to relieve the beaten down and exhausted 2nd Marine Division, the men of the 36th ID marched through the blood-soaked fields

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[99] Ben H. Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th: The Experience of the 36th Infantry Division in World War I* (Pennsylvania; Pantianos Classics, 1920), 45.
[100] White, *The 90th Division in World War I*, 12.
[101] Lonnie J. White, *From Panthers to Arrowheads: The 36th (Texas-Oklahoma) Division in World War I* (Novato; Presidio Press, 1984),
102.

of the Somme. The unit found itself in the very same location as the deadliest battle of the war some two years prior. As they passed along the very roads and paths the Roman military had marched along two thousand years earlier, the division experienced a very different sense from what they had envisioned the European countryside to look like. Instead of beautiful countryside, the landscape was blemished with massive craters, some several meters deep. Shell fragments and "dud" rounds littered the fields and roads. A maze of barbed wire, traps, and mines had been strewn among territory between the trenches. When the unit reached the village of St. Entienne, they halted and dropped all unnecessary equipment, received ammunition, and did what the army does best: wait for further instruction.

As a result of arriving several weeks before the 36th ID and the onset of in-theater training, the Oklahomans of the 90th ID found themselves placed in the American I Corps under the command of Major General Hunter Liggett and moved into position along the southern line of the St. Mihael salient in September 1918, to participate in the United States' first large-scale offensive operation.[102] To give the Germans the least amount of warning of the upcoming assault on the salient, General Pershing favored no artillery bombardment before the attack. Fortunately for the doughboys lined up in the trenches awaiting the whistle blast that would send them over the top, Colonel George C. Marshall, the chief operations officer for the 1st Army, convinced General Pershing to allow a small barrage leading up to the attack. Pershing acquiesced, and the artillery strike began on September 12 at 1 a.m. Close to 3000 artillery cannons began their deadly symphony. At 5 a.m., the call rang out, and the men of the 90th went over the top to push the salient back to the main line.[103] After five days of brutal fighting, the

[102] "Brief History of the Famous 90th Division," *The Duncan Banner*, Friday, May 9, 1919.
[103] White, *The 90th Division*, 95.

90th Division and several other American, French, and British units successfully pushed the salient back to the main line of defense. Even though the 90th ID would participate in the Meuse-Argonne offensive in October, much of the news in Oklahoma concerned the 36th Infantry Division.

As the 36th ID waited for the guides from the Marine 2nd Division to escort them to the section where they would be entrenched, the Germans initiated a heavy artillery barrage, delaying the guides' arrival until later that evening.[104] Once the relief in place had been executed, the 36th Division was now entrenched along the front; there was nothing between them and the German line other than the bleak and cursed landscape of No Man's Land. During this period of occupation, they waited to execute an attack or defend themselves from a German assault. At night, German air raids and artillery frequently attacked the Allied lines.[105] Many a night, the 36th ID was treated with fireworks displays of American Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) batteries attempting to keep the German aircraft from reaching Allied lines. In one instance, an Oklahoma doughboy, Oscar Noble, recounted that the AAA batteries let a German plane slip through the defensive perimeter, resulting in the destruction of an Allied observation balloon.[106]

Life in the trenches was precarious and unpredictable. Soldiers stayed hidden in the relative safety of trenches and dugouts as much as possible to avoid sniper fire, sporadic machine fire, and artillery barrages. Outside the main trench lines lay rudimentary dugouts where soldiers took cover during artillery bombardments while they maneuvered outside the trenches. One soldier explained, "To be shelled is the worst thing in the world. In absolute darkness, we simply

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[104] Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th*, 45.
[105] Letter from Joseph Bilt to Stratton Brooks, Stratton Brooks Collection, University of Oklahoma, Stratton Brooks Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.
[106] Brad Agnew, *Chronicles of Oklahoma,* "Over There in the 'Damned Old Band,'" (Oklahoma City, OK; Oklahoma Historical Society), 30.

lay and trembled from sheer nervous tension."[107] Artillery shelling could last hours and even days, with hundreds if not thousands of rounds being fired in a single engagement. Aside from the soldiers huddled together in the dugouts, heads pressed against the ground, many fat trench rats kept them company.

As soldiers and marines lived and died in the mud, combat operations occurred miles above their heads between aviators. American combat aviators completed a variety of missions, from reconnaissance to bombing runs and harassing enemy ground positions. On the first day of the St. Mihiel offensive on September 12th, 1918, aviators flew lower than usual due to stormy weather. Observer Henry C. Bogle described the event, "the cloud ceiling could not have been over three or four hundred yards off the earth, but Young kept the plane under it, and I think we must have flown through our own barrage."[108] It was not uncommon for planes to take small arms fire from the ground or even fly through artillery barrages, circumstances pending. Death was a common experience for the Air Service aviators. "Out of every 100 trained pilots who reached the front lines, 33 were killed."[109]

Roy Lewis, a Cherokee from Nowata, Oklahoma, was one of the few, if not the only, Native Americans to serve as a motor expert for the French Air Service. Joseph K. Dixon interviewed Roy Lewis at Greenhut Debarkation Hospital #3 in New York. As a motor mechanic, it was common practice to ride in the plane for maintenance purposes. Lewis commented on one occasion when his aircraft went up to 22,000 feet to test a new motor. All of a sudden, "we took a downward course." Upon landing and determining the engine was okay and

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[107] Jennifer D. Keene, *World War I: The American Soldier Experience* (Connecticut; Greenwood Press, 2006), 139.

[108] James J. Hudson, *Hostile Skies: A Combat History of the American Air Service in World War I*, (New York, Syracuse University Press, 1968), 48.

[109] Keene, *World War I Experience*, 147.

still not knowing what had happened, the pilot told him to look up. Lewis saw "over 30 planes hovering over us, and all I could hear was the aircraft protection."[110] A dogfight had broken out between German and French Aviators.

The total U.S. Air Service strength was around 20,000 officers and 175,000 enlisted men; forty-five air squadrons saw actual combat service.[111] The Germans shot down and destroyed almost three hundred American planes in the line of duty. During its short combat lifespan, the American Air Service was an integral part of keeping the soldiers in the trenches up to date with enemy positions up to one hundred and sixty miles behind enemy lines and provided covering fire during assaults on enemy positions. Each Allied plane in the air and antiaircraft weapon on the ground added to Allied air superiority, providing freedom of maneuver for ground elements such as the 36th and 90th IDs. First Lieutenant William T. Ponder of Magnum, Oklahoma, first flew for the French but then transferred to the American Air Service. He is credited with shooting down several German aircraft in support of maneuver forces and was awarded the Croix de Guerre.[112] While General Pershing only foresaw aviation as an intelligence-gathering service, General Billy Mitchell proposed dropping an infantry division behind enemy lines utilizing parachutes.[113] However, the war ended before that idea could be fully fleshed out.

Private Joseph Filario Tafoya, a twenty-eight-year-old Santa Clara Pueblo Indian, described his trench experience as "hiking into the front through mud and rain, water up to the knee."[114] Several Native American stories in Susan Applegate Krause's work *North American*

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[110] Susan A. Krouse, *North American Indians in the Great War (Studies in War, Society, and the Military)* (Lincoln; The University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 51.
[111] Hudson, *Hostile Skies*, 300.
[112] *The Tulsa Tribune*, "Oklahoma Airman's Happiest Moment When He Brings Down Two Huns," Sunday, June 30th, 1918.
[113] Keene, *World War I Experience*, 150.
[114] Krouse, *North American Indians*, 40.

Indians in the Great War provide depictions of the front that reflect a shared experience by all American forces in combat. The long wait to go over the top of the trench was maddening. Both friendly and enemy artillery fire lasted for hours and sometimes even days. When the whistles finally blew to signal the advance. After exfiltrating the trench line, the soldiers charged the enemy line while receiving sporadic machine-gun fire and artillery shells exploding all around them, throwing hot shrapnel through the air. While dodging enemy fire during the advancement, it was not uncommon for soldiers to pass the corpses rotting from previous engagements in No Man's Land.[115]

While the daylight provided some psychological relief and respite, it was the night when the war was at its most savage. Soldiers from both sides of the foray would go over the top of the trench under cover of darkness into No Man's Land, the strip of land between opposing forces. It was pockmarked from artillery and mortar fire. As teams moved through the layers of barbed wire fence just atop the trenches leading into No Man's Land, soldiers would look for wounded comrades and supplies and, at times, raid the opposing trench. The soldiers carried out multiple types of raids, and the raids intended to inflict harm on the opposing forces' defensive structures to allow the next major attack to have a higher chance of success, gain intelligence, probe for weaknesses, or even take prisoners.[116]

To reduce casualties and minimize engagements while maximizing raid effectiveness, the U.S. troops would resort to ethnic stereotypes regarding some of its soldiers. The 36th and 90th IDs selected American Indian troops to lead these patrols and raids because of the stereotypes

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[115] Arthur Empey, "Over the Top," *The Okemah Ledger*, June 27, 1918, 6.
[116] Headquarters 358th Infantry, *History and Statistics of the 358th Infantry, Ninetieth Division,* (United States Army, May 1, 1919), 11. http://www.90thdivisionassoc.org/History/UnitHistories/PDF/WW1/358%20Inf%20Regt.pdf accessed July 2, 2023.

that surrounded their upbringing as expert warriors and scouts but also because many of them showed competence with the skill. One such example is James M. Elson of the Tulalip Reservation, who guided numerous sentry squads to an isolated post in No Man's Land. He was also utilized to lead patrols on the outskirts of Brieulles, with the objective of securing information about the enemy occupation. To his credit, Elson's actions showed exceptional skill, courage, and coolness under fire.[117]

Probably the most famous aspect of trench warfare is the use of gas as a weapon on a mass scale. Chlorine and phosgene gas (developed by German Chemical Engineer Fritz Haber), the two most common gasses utilized by both sides, attacked the respiratory system, causing a buildup of fluid in the lungs. Victims drowned in their bodily fluids.[118] While gas could dissipate relatively quickly based on wind conditions, it was notorious for lingering in the depressions of the trenches and No Man's Land.[119] Based on exposure levels, a gassed soldier might have lived in agony for days, gradually suffocating. Despite the terror that enshrouded gas attacks, it was still the least lethal of weapons.[120] Some gas attacks caused only somewhat mild cases. Private Albert Carpenter of the 142nd IR, 36th ID, was sent to the hospital after a recent attack. Despite not wearing his mask, he was given some "20 pills" and sent right back to the front.[121] Bullets,

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[117]The American Indian in the World War, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, 1927, https://collections.ctdigitalarchive.org/islandora/object/30002%3A5336599/datastream/PDF/download, accessed March 14, 2023.
[118] Keene, *World War I Experience,* 142.
[119] Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF 1917-1918* (New York; Popular Library, 1964), 91.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Carpenter, Shirley, and Albert John Carpenter. *Albert John Carpenter Collection*. 1917. Personal Narrative. https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.00225/.

bayonets, and shrapnel became only a few of the methods used to cause mass causalities; poisonous gasses came to dominate where projectiles failed.

While not under fire, the troops found time to write and send letters back to the home front. Despite the censorship of the military mail service, these letters validated on paper many soldiers' unspoken thoughts about their pride, or discontent, with fighting for their country in the Great War. Joseph S. Bilt of Headquarters Company, 144th Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, wrote that he was proud of his service but was surprised at the primitive nature of Europe compared to the United States and described the Russians as socially ignorant beings.[122] It is in personal correspondence where each service member's true thoughts and feelings on the war canonized themselves on paper for people back home to read.

Even though the soldiers found the time to write, the war did not stop. The 36th took shelter from various explosions. The shelling from German artillery continued to strafe the lines; it was frequent and accurate. It was quickly learned that if anyone exposed themselves to the enemy, they would have no less than half a dozen machine guns open fire on them, putting the whole unit at risk of having some light artillery dropped on their location.[123] The security of the trench was the best hope a soldier had for staying alive. While the soldiers continued to train and maintain readiness within the trenches, fresh orders arrived, indicating a possible future assault. As the officers clustered together for hours at a time to prepare their orders in alignment with those issued by their higher headquarters, the mass of soldiers knew that this would not be some simple probe of the German line but something that would be far grander in scale. On October 8th, 1918, during the lull between major Allied offensives, two soldiers of the 142nd IR

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[122] Letter from Joseph Bilt to Stratton Brooks, Stratton D. Brooks Collection, Oversize Box I, University of Oklahoma, Western History Collection.
[123] Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th*, 71.

distinguished themselves above all others, going beyond the call of duty to ensure the safety and security of their fellow troopers. Samuel M. Sampler, a resident of Mangum, Oklahoma, currently of H Company, 142nd IR, spotted a German machine gun (MG) position that was causing catastrophic damage to the men of H Company as they conducted an assault on enemy fortifications. As Samuels rushed the MG nest, he threw three hand grenades during his rush, resulting in the destruction of the nest, which forced 28 Germans to surrender. Harold L. Turner of F Company, from Seminole, Oklahoma, also rushed several machine gun nests with a fixed bayonet, killing the defending Germans and resulting in the continued advance by the remaining members of F Company. Both men received the Medal of Honor for their actions.[124]

On October 10, 1918, the men of the 36th Infantry Division, supported by sections of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division, the U.S. 35th Infantry Division, the French 4th Army, and many more allied units, began the Meuse-Argonne offensive.[125] This was to be the last great offensive of the war and was designed to finally knock out the Germans' ability to continue waging war. On the afternoon of October 10, allied soldiers stand poised, awaiting the blast from the officer's whistle, signaling that the time has come to go over the top and knock the enemy off the slopes of Mauchalt, France. [126] "With packs adjusted, helmets strapped to our heads, gas masks at the 'alert' and bayonets flickering sunny reflections upon the ground and upon one another of the men," they wait.[127] As the hour struck 1700, the Allies began the much-anticipated assault on the German lines at Machault. With the sound of a whistle, thousands of men rapidly began

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[124] Chaplain C.H. Barnes, *The History of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division* (,1920), 183.
[125]Center of Military History, *Order of Battle: American Expeditionary Forces Volume 2* (Department of the Army; Center of Military History,1988) 227.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Dae Hinson, *As I Saw it in the Trenches: Memoir of a Doughboy in World War I* (Jefferson, NC; MacFarland & Company, Inc, 2015), 81.

scaling the ladders, which led them out of the safety of the trench or vaulted themselves over hastily built dirt barricades. As the first men emerged, the German line opened fire with small arms and various types of artillery. One Oklahoma serviceman recalled that, occasionally, the enemy airplanes strafed the charging service members.[128]

Like every plan, it was always tactically sound in theory; then, the first shot was fired. As soon as the attack began, confusion set in amongst the troops. The 36th ID used the French forces as a guide to their objective. But as soon as the attack started, units became bogged down by artillery fire, forcing them to stop and regroup. Other regiments overshot the German lines and had to turn around, and some sections found themselves being shelled with gas rounds, forcing them to put on gas masks.[129] Despite the confusion and chaos created by the battle, the Allies pushed the Germans out of their positions and occupied the territory surrounding Machault. As a reward for their achievements, the 36th ID was granted several hours of rest to reconsolidate resources and take a count of the dead, wounded, and missing. The next day, October 12, the division continued the assault that had started the previous day to keep the retreating Germans on the run and frustrate their ability to organize a defense or counterattack.[130] Eventually, they would reestablish the allied lines just North of Vaux-Champagne. The Meuse-Argonne offensive remains the most significant and bloodiest conflict the United States Army has engaged in.[131]

As the campaign raged, scouting enemy positions to exploit weaknesses was paramount. Sergeant Charles Robert Ward, a twenty-six-year-old Cherokee from Nowata, Oklahoma, served

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[128] Letter from Joseph Bilt to Stratton Brooks, Stratton D. Brooks Collection, Oversize Box I, University of Oklahoma, Western History Collection.
[129] Chastain, *The Story of the 36th*, 87.
[130] Center of Military History, *Order of Battle: American Expeditionary Forces* Volume 1, 227.
[131] Brad Agnew, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, "Over There in the 'Damned Old Band,'" (Oklahoma City, OK; Oklahoma Historical Society.

as a scout for Company K, 358th Infantry, 90th ID. During one of his scouting missions, Sergeant Ward killed three out of four reported German snipers who targeted Allied machine gun positions along the front. For his gallantry and heroism under fire, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.[132]

On October 14-15, the 36th ID relieved the French 15th Colonial Division. They now positioned themselves between the 79th French Infantry Division on the right and the French 10th Colonial Division on the left.[133] While they occupied the area outside of Vaux-Champagne, the Americans spent time picking off any German patrol that dared exit their trench. During this time, the Allies took several German soldiers prisoner during their attempted raid on the Allied line. Captain Chastaine noted that allied snipers performed some excellent feats picking off German troops. He credited "an Oklahoman, stationed in a post along the canal near Attigny, with at least four successful shots in two [Germans], and it was declared that he accomplished other results which could not be verified officially."[134]

During The Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the success of any mission hinged on communication. However, it was increasingly common for the Allied messages to be intercepted and quickly broken by German Intelligence divisions. While the Americans and other Allies made multiple efforts to increase communication security measures, most efforts by Allied units failed to encrypt communications successfully.[135] These rapid security measures proved dangerous because the Headquarters units tried utilizing the new procedures before their

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[132] Krouse, *North American Indians*, 69.
[133] George B. Clark, *The American Expeditionary Force in World War I: A Statistical History, 197-1919* (Jefferson, NC; MacFarland & Company, Inc, 2011), 169.
[134] Chastaine, *The Story of the* 36th, 102.
[135] William C. Meadows, *The First Code Talkers: Native American Communication in World War I* (Norman; University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 66.

successful distribution to all affected units. Communicating without means of encryption or any other form of security undoubtedly led to thousands of avoidable casualties for the Allies, and it increased the chances of success for the Germans to either quickly counterattack a recently lost position before the Americans could effectively establish themselves or provide the Germans time to bolster the defensive perimeters around areas of operation with incoming attacks.

While Col. Bloor and the rest of the 142nd Infantry continued to fortify the Champagne area recently taken from the Germans, the plan for the unit's attack on Forrest Ferme began. With the attack only several weeks out, General William Smith, Commander of the 36th ID, and his staff quickly worked to find a solution for getting instantaneous messages across the units over secure channels. On October 27th, the orders for the Allied artillery to begin bombarding the German lines and then move closer as the Native soldiers in the 36th ID transmitted the order for a creeping barrage in the Choctaw language at 11:40 a.m.[136] A full-on attack by the Allies was messaged in Choctaw by the Native members of Company E, 142nd Infantry Regiment, and, as expected, caught the Germans completely off guard.

The development of the original "code talkers," the phrase derived from the code talkers in the Second World War, is now commonly associated with the soldiers using native languages during the First World War and came from the 142nd Infantry Regiment, the majority Oklahoman contingent of the 36th Infantry Division. It had a company of Native Americans who collectively spoke twenty-six different languages or dialects, with only a handful having a written language. According to a correspondence memorandum from Colonel A.W. Bloor, the commanding officer of the 142nd Infantry Regiment, to the Commanding General of the 36th Infantry Division, "The

[136] Meadows, *The First Code Talkers*,71.

regiment was fortunate in having two Indian officers who spoke several of the dialects. The unit chose Indians from the Choctaw tribe and placed one in each [Command Post]."[137]

The assault on a village was coordinated using the Choctaw language, and it caught the Germans completely by surprise. From the massive success resulting from using the Choctaw language to transmit messages, it was surmised that the Germans could not break that code.[138] In subsequent engagements, the Code Talkers coordinated infantry movements and artillery bombardments and relayed enemy disposition reports. Since the language of the Choctaw was not derived from a traditional European language or dialect and was not based on a mathematical progression, it was nearly impossible for the Germans to decode. The tactic of using North American Indian languages for communication encryption was the first time in the history of warfare that America employed Native languages against a foreign nation.[139] It is almost ironic that the Native languages the U.S. government vehemently forbade within the federal boarding school system became the encryption tools the U.S. came to rely on to relay secret messages on the frontlines of Europe. The U.S. depended on it so much that this strategy would be used again to great success during the Second World War.

After two more weeks of fighting, the 36th ID was relieved by the French 61st and 22nd Divisions on 28 October. After their long march back to Tonnerre, a small village 100 miles outside of Paris, the division received word on November 7th that the German government had requested an armistice. After four more days of training and rehabilitation, the armistice went

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[137] A.W. Bloor, *Transmitting Messages in Choctaw*, Memorandum, A.P.O. 796, From Center of Military History, https://history.army.mil/html/topics/natam/wwi-choctaw.html (accessed May 8th, 2022).
[138] A.W. Bloor, *Transmitting Messages in Choctaw*, Memorandum, 2.
[139] Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008, Public Law, U.S. Congress, https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ420/PLAW-110publ420.pdf (accessed May 8th, 2020).

into effect on November 11th, at 1100 a.m. There was no great jubilation or boisterous shouts of joy among most service members. Like most other news regarding the war, most men took the news of the armistice with great indifference. Captain Ward Schrantz, the former journalist from Carthage, Missouri, presumed that the soldiers potentially felt jubilation within their own heads, but outwardly, they expressed somber and stoic attitudes as if nothing new had changed. After news of the armistice reached the United States, Major General W.R. Smith, the commanding general of the 36th Division, received a telegram from the *Star-Telegram* in Fort Worth, Texas. It read, "All Texas and Oklahoma rejoices over the valiant work of the 36th Division. This is particularly true of the people of Fort Worth who came to know and regard the boys so highly while here."[140] The note held a state-personalized message from each state's governor. Governor Williams of Oklahoma wrote in the message from the *Star-Telegram*, "As Governor of Oklahoma, I join in congratulations to the 36th Division. We are proud of them and glory in the account they have given themselves and appreciate every one of them. To every Oklahoman, we send greetings."[141]

As the 36th ID took residence in their designated billets in Tonnerre, the troops took stock of clothing and what materials they needed to maintain hygiene and readiness. Soldiers viewed shoes and socks as luxury commodities at this point. The officers and senior non-commissioned officers did their best to find suitable clothing and shoes for their soldiers, mainly as they settled in for the winter, making it more of a priority. As the cold set in, so did sickness. It wasn't long before disease was just as deadly as being on the front had been. As soldiers came off the line, the camps surrounding the disembarkation ports quickly became overcrowded, and inclement

[140] Barnes, *The History of the 142nd*, 43.
[141] Ibid. 43.

weather soon besieged them. Disease and misery quickly diminished the troops' morale. The combination of cold, rain, and the omnipresent Spanish Flu drowned the troops in misery.[142] One American officer stated, "Perhaps nothing touched the hearts of the American people more than did the deaths of those who had survived strenuous training, an ocean voyage fraught with peril, enemy shells, and disease, only to succumb to illness after all warfare was over."[143]

As other units succumbed heavily to the Spanish Flu, the 36th ID only had a confirmed 160 cases of influenza breach its ranks. In addition to the Spanish Flu, the troops suffered 111 cases of pneumonia and thirteen cases of meningitis, resulting in six deaths.[144] The reason for such low sickness rates in the division was a strict regimen of daily hygiene that the senior officers and non-commissioned officers heavily enforced. Because of their rigid hygiene standards, the 36th reportedly remained one of the healthiest units in Europe through the entirety of the 1918-1919 winter. When the spring of 1919 came, the 36th and 90th IDs established new intensive training regimens to maintain the unit's warfighting ability. In addition, the troops of the 36th engaged in plenty of extracurricular activities outside of formal training, from athletic teams to school, and soldiers could also travel to limited locations if they acquired a pass. Thousands of soldiers from the division took leave and traveled throughout France and other parts of Europe deemed acceptable for travel. By May 1919, sentiments turned more towards home as the 36th moved back to the port city of Brest and boarded ships bound for the United States on May 7, 1919. Two servicemembers from the 142nd Infantry Regiment, the unit made up of Oklahomans, tragically fell overboard on their way back to the States. A treacherous storm

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[142] Keene, *World War I Experience* ,185 and 168.
[143] Harlow, *The Trail of the 61st*, 56.
[144] Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th*, 132.

swept Corporal Harry S. Hovey and Private Joseph C. Strong.[145] These would be the last two casualties on the voyage home, but the units remained ever-vigilant to negate the possibility of any further non-combat-related deaths.

While the Oklahomans of the 36th ID conducted training, waiting for their turn to leave for home, the Oklahomans in the 90th ID marched through Belgium into Germany. They occupied the German towns of Berncastle, Wehien, and Daun from December 1918 through May 1919, when both divisions left Europe for the U.S. The Headquarters units primarily stayed in the three towns mentioned above; however, the division as a whole was responsible for overseeing the occupation of around 110 towns throughout Germany. During the occupation, the division was tasked with maintaining itself as a fighting force while operating the daily occupational administrative duties in conjunction with the German administrations of the various Krieses (districts) within their sectors. By the proclamation of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the occupational forces would remain out of the affairs of the German people and district administrators as much as possible.[146]

On June 12th, 1919, the *Edmond Sun* reported that all Oklahoma troops had returned to American soil.[147] With the 90th and 36th divisions subsequently relocated back to Camp Bowie, Texas, for demobilization, many of the soldiers' expired or expiring contracts. Happily, these soldiers received their discharges and began to return home. For most non-Regular Army Oklahomans, their time in the Army was over, and many wanted to go home and get back to the lives they left behind. While many U.S. service members returned home eagerly, wanting

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[145] Ibid, 148.
[146] George Wythe, *A History of the 90th Division*, (90th Division Association, 1920), http://www.90thdivisionassoc.org/90thDivisionFolders/mervinbooks/WWI90/WWI9016/WWI9016.htm, accessed July 15, 2023.
[147] *The Edmond Sun*, "Oklahoma Troops are all home." June 12, 1919.

nothing more than to get back to what they considered an everyday life, many would come back psychologically damaged. Many returned expecting to begin where they left off, yet their friends and family, everyone they had known, continued to live and grow during that service member's absence. The individual service member would have to find ways to incorporate himself back into the structure of society regardless of the omnipresent feeling of occupying a shadow.

A report in the *Harlow Weekly* published on Wednesday, May 7th, 1919, entitled "Oklahoma After the War." noted that Oklahoma had 1,025 servicemen killed in action, or died of wounds received in combat, or died in non-combat-related accidents. 704 Oklahoman servicemembers succumbed to disease, Oklahoma suffered 3,978 wounded in action, and 494 remained missing in action. By this date, in 1919, Oklahoma had sustained a total of 6,201 casualties, with the most recent combat-related death being Robert Tarrant of Hooker, Oklahoma, who died of his wounds the week prior.[148] Oklahoma suffered roughly seven percent casualties, with most of those coming from the soldiers serving in the 36th and 90th Infantry Divisions. Some of the surrounding central U.S. states suffered lower casualty rates than Oklahoma in relation to the total number of participating service members during the war: Iowa had four percent casualties,[149] Texas had three percent casualties,[150] and Missouri, like Oklahoma, suffered seven percent casualties.[151]

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[148] Orville D. Hall, "Oklahoma After the War," *Harlow's Weekly*, May 7, 1919, 13.
[149] "World War I Honor Roll," State Historical Society of Iowa, accessed July 19, 2023, https://history.iowa.gov/history/museum/exhibits/world-war-i-honor-roll#:~:text=By%20the%20time%20the%20war,who%20was%20among%20the%20last.
[150] "The War to End War," Texas Historical Commission, accessed July 19, 2023, https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/military-history/world-war-i-centennial#:~:text=Few%20lives%20remained%20untouched%20by,over%205%2C000%20lost%20their%20lives
[151] "World War I research Guide," The State Historical Society of Missouri, accessed July 19, 2023

Many soldiers on their way home understood that they would need to adjust mentally. One soldier wrote in his memoir, "I have decided that I must clear my mind of all the terrible experiences for the past two years as much as possible."[152] He did not want "to make my family and friends sad and uncomfortable by inflicting upon them the horrors in which they had no part." By the end of June 1919, almost three million American troops had received discharges and went wherever they wanted. The War Department, in conjunction with the American Legion, was as busy as ever assisting returning veterans in finding employment. As much as they wanted the veterans to return to precisely what they did before the war, the former service members had been changed, and many of them flocked to the larger cities. In 1910, Oklahoma City had a population of roughly 65,000 residents. By 1920, the population had boomed to 91,295.[153] This is attributable to the rise in war-related industries and urban growth resulting from the decline of agricultural jobs after the war's conclusion when the price of most of Oklahoma's agricultural goods sharply dropped.

People welcomed Native American troops back in equal celebration with their White counterparts. As transport ships docked on the East Coast of the United States, a great sense of pride and delight emanated from the service members as they paraded through the city streets and ran to embrace loved ones. They received the praise and admiration of a grateful nation.[154] The nation reciprocated the feelings back on the Native American service members. Enoch Crowder, the Provost Marshal General, was recorded commending the American Indians for

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https://shsmo.org/research/guides/ww1#:~:text=By%20war's%20end%2C%2011%2C172%20Missourians,of%20Honor%20for%20their%20actions.

[152] Keene, *World War I Experience* 186.

[153] David J. Wishart, Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, "Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.ct.036, accessed, March 23, 2023.

[154] Britten, *American Indians in the War,*160.

demonstrating their "traditional aptitude" for a military career and for "nobly showing their zeal for the great cause." A group of Otoe Indians in Red Rock, Oklahoma, asked the Indian Boarding school for a steer from the school's herd to slaughter in celebration ceremonies during Christmas of 1918 to mark the war's end. The Superintendent wrote the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "In view of the fact that the Indians have all been loyal to our Government during this struggle, I have the honor to recommend that authority be granted me to slaughter one of our steers of the school herd and donate it to the reservation Indians for their feast which they expect to have during the Christmas."[155] In a letter written on September 18th, 1920, General Pershing lauded the service of Native peoples during the war. He stated that during his early military service, he respected the Indians as foes and expressed sadness at their dissolution as a result of an expanding America. He further conveyed sympathy and endearment for the Native scouts utilized during the border campaigns against Mexico. He concluded, "It was the World War that the North American Indian took his place beside every other American in offering his life in the great cause, whereas a splendid soldier, he fought with the courage and valor of his ancestors."[156]

While Native American participation in the Great War did not inspire immediate social change at either state or federal levels in the years after the conclusion of the war, it did serve as a catalyst for future change and Native activism. It is also ironic that the Bureau of Indian Affairs' purpose of amalgamating Native American soldiers with White service members was counter to assimilation and acculturation hopes. Military service accentuated Native cultural

[155] Itoyo, George A, Manuscript. U.S. Department of the Interior: Office of Indian Affairs.
[156] John J. Pershing, "Appreciation of the American Indian in the World War." Headquarters General of the Armies, Washington. https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/american-indians-service-world-war-i-1920. Accessed February 24, 2022.

practices and traditions with a more expansive audience. Wartime service facilitated the resurgence of victory dances, war songs, traditional feasts, and giveaways, breathing new life into Native cultures and beliefs.[157]

When Native American veterans started reappearing at boarding schools and returning to their respective reservations, some came back changed, and it did not go unnoticed. The stereotypical "good Indian" had come to flourish. With Native American service returning home, the Bureau of Indian Affairs quickly began to publish racially insensitive reports on the maturation of Native men. According to records from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native Americans who participated in the war effort on behalf of the military wholly came back as better people. They appeared less timid, more excellent exhibitors of self-confidence, and more polite.[158] Ultimately, through the Native Americans' contact with the outside world in tandem with their association with discipline, they returned to their schools and reservations as much more desirable students. The BIA perceived that Native service members would now make better citizens as a result of their wartime service.

One such American Indian veteran was described as wounded, gassed, and shell-shocked before returning to his Oklahoma reservation. When he returned, honorably discharged, he reported to the agency office square-shouldered, level-eyed, courteous, self-reliant, and talked intelligently. Overall, it was an extraordinary transformation caused by contact with the outside world.[159] These racially charged publications and statements denigrated the Native American

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[157] Britten, *American Indians in World War I*, 186.
[158] *The American Indian in World War.* Manuscript. U.S. Department of the Interior: Office of Indian Affairs. U.S. Federal Documents, From U.S. Indian School, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t0xq3w79s&view=1up&seq=1 (accessed: May 8th, 2022).
[159] Ibid, 2.

service members, whether intentionally or not. They insinuated that Native Americans' wartime service civilized them more than their time at U.S.-run schools.[160]

A few years after the War's conclusion, the Bureau of Indian Affairs estimated that over ten thousand American Indians participated in the war, whether the military drafted them or enlisted. This estimate illustrates that almost twenty percent of the Native adult male population participated.[161] This was one of the highest rates for any ethnic group.[162] On the other hand, Black American service members made up roughly eight percent of Black American males, and around eighteen percent of White immigrants served in the U.S. Army.[163] When the war concluded, the Wilson Administration was not looking forward to paying for pensions long or short-term medical care and feared veteran organizations "unionizing" similarly to Civil War veterans who intended to fight for further monetary or medical benefits in recognition of wartime service.[164]

The severance never happened as intended, and the Great War veterans won several appeals and court battles to increase disability, educational, and monetary benefits. Since the government decided who went to fight and who stayed at home, the veterans saw it as only fair that they received benefits for doing their civic duty. The court battles the veterans fought and won led to a better understanding between veterans' organizations and whichever administration

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[160] What made it worse was the limited source material from the Native communities themselves from that time turned most research to BIA and federal documents, which as a consequence, obscures Native sources.
[161] Britten, *American Indians in World War I*, 59.
[162] As a result of poor record keeping, we cannot know with certainty the number of Indians involved.
[163] 1910 Census, 248.
[164] Keene, *Doughboys*, 162.

and political party occupied the White House and Congress. It paved the way for the current benefits systems such as the Veteran's Administration.[165]

As a result of the war, the concept of Pan-Indianism grew. The idea of Pan-Indianism, the complex political and social structures that crossed tribal lines, was primarily a response to the Dawes Act's butchering of tribal independence. As a result of the war and Oklahoma Native Americans' wartime service, tribal leadership was galvanized to become more vocal regarding their people's treatment. Since every tribe in Oklahoma, and nationally, was affected by federal policy, the logical response was for each tribe to be represented together when petitioning state and federal governments. The organizations that grew from post-World War I activities still operate today on behalf of many Native American tribes.[166]

Through the formation of such organizations as American Indians of the World War (AIWW), The League of Indians of Canada, and the Wigwam Club, the Native peoples of North America had a way to unify under shared experiences. Native American veterans did achieve a significant feat from their wartime service: "They gained a clear path to citizenship: a November 1919 law granted citizenship to Native men who served and attributed that status retroactively to the date of enlistment. The law's terms required that veterans seek out citizenship themselves, but few did so."[167] Whether it was a result of a lack of knowledge about the act or the extraordinarily complicated process to apply for citizenship, few Native Americans reportedly actioned this piece of legislation. On November 6th, 1919, Native veterans received the right to

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[165] "History Overview." VA History, May 10, 2023. https://department.va.gov/history/history-overview/#:~:text=In%201811%2C%20the%20federal%20government,for%20their%20widows%20and%20dependents.
[166] Thomas W. Cowger, "Pan-Indian Movements," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=PA010.
[167] Capozzola, "The Legacies of Citizenship," 11.

petition the U.S. Government for citizenship. On January 6th, 1920, Cato Sells, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, notified the heads of the reservations of the rights under the Citizen Act.[168] The Citizenship Act stated, "That every American Indian who served in the Military or Naval Establishments of the United States during the war against Imperial German Government, and who has received or who shall hereafter receive an honorable discharge, shall be granted full citizenship…."[169] After the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ensured that all reservations did not go without information on the Citizenship Act, he encouraged reservation heads to seek out veterans to inform them about the new legislation. Through the Native Americans on the frontlines of the European battlefields, the participation in home front war efforts, and legal proceedings arguing for better rights, contemporary Native communities made significant gains.

While the United States government patted itself on the back for this historic piece of legislation, it required an extensive and complicated bureaucratic process from initial application to approval. Any Native American veteran wanting to apply had to fill out the application in triplicate and swear to it by the reservation superintendent or another qualified official. The official or superintendent would mail the application to the Bureau of Naturalization, after which the Native American applicant was instructed by the Naturalization office on where to travel for a court appearance to be examined in front of officials. If the applicant passed this scrutiny, could they then petition the court to obtain a certificate of citizenship.[170]

The Great War was a defining moment in Oklahoma's history. As a result of the efforts of the 142nd Infantry Regiment and the rest of the Oklahoma-Texas composed 36th and 90th

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[168] Susan A. Krouse, *North American Indians in the Great War (Studies in War, Society, and the Military)* (Lincoln; The University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 154.
[169] Ibid, 155.
[170] Krouse, *North American Indians*, 179.

Infantry Divisions and the zeal espoused by the people of Oklahoma and the state legislature, Oklahoma's National Guard increased in size post-war. The Oklahoma National Guard grew by one hundred and fifty percent of its pre-war number. Starting in 1917, the OKNG was composed of one Infantry Regiment. After the war's conclusion, the sixty-sixth Congress passed several addendums concerning the National Defense of 1916. Over the next couple of years, Oklahoma added several more regiments to its National Guard forces: the 179th Infantry Regiment, and the 180th Infantry Regiment, along with additional engineer and artillery support elements. These units rolled into the large 45th Infantry Division alongside several other States units, such as Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas, with the Headquarters, or lead element, located in Oklahoma City.[171]

Over 90,000 male Sooners went to fight in military units in Europe. Nearly a third of Oklahoma's fighting men found themselves drafted. Almost five percent of the state's population fought in the armed services during the war. Those numbers only account for those in the military. This does not include the nursing volunteers, support staff for standing military installations, and the many people involved with the mobilization efforts alongside the stabilizing measures ensuring the continuity of state industries.

The University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, today known as Oklahoma State University, would formalize their Student Army Training Corps programs into the federally organized Reserve Officer Training Corps. After implementing the ROTC program, six other Oklahoma universities would participate: Northeastern State University, Oklahoma City University, University of Central Oklahoma, Cameron University,

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[171] Kenny A. Franks, "Oklahoma National Guard," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=OK066.

Oklahoma Christian University, and Southern Nazarene University. Each new year, dozens of Oklahoma university students are commissioned into the United States Army as officers in the Regular Army, National Guard, or Reserves.

Through the trials and tribulations of shared experiences between Anglo-American and Native American service members, they developed a working relationship as they lived, ate, and trained together.[172] This would not and did not merge the two cultures as one people; however, it did engender a deeper and more amiable understanding between the two groups. During their time in the war to create bonds outside of combat, the soldiers of both Texas and Oklahoma, Anglo-Americans and Native Americans, found another way to pass the time and further develop the bonds of brotherhood that would follow them back to Oklahoma and into civilian life—the shared love for football.

During their initial training in Camp Bowie, COL Bloor of the 142nd Infantry Regiment and Chaplain Barnes's assistance created a minor football league intending to improve morale and create a cohesive team among men of different backgrounds. Over 100 men volunteered to play and formed several teams. They played a handful of games over the course of several days while at Camp Bowie. Soon afterward, the troops of the 142nd IR began to see themselves as members of the 142nd and not displaced members of the 1st Oklahoma IR or 7th Texas IR.[173] While waiting at the port cities, the 36th ID put on additional football games in an effort to maintain troop morale and provide a much-needed distraction to soldiers anxiously awaiting to go home.[174] Sports have always softened the barriers among people of different classes, backgrounds, and ethnicities, football more so than others in Texas and Oklahoma. Small acts

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[172] Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th*, 13.
[173] Barnes, *The History of the 142nd Infantry* Regiment, 21.
[174] Chastaine, *The Story of the 36th*, 132.

and events such as pickup games and informal activities continued to drive these men during their return to civilian lives and, without a shadow of a doubt, altered their perceptions of working cooperatively with others within that organization. Unfortunately, the camaraderie developed among the service members did not always translate to the rest of Oklahoma society and culture.

Since the Army did not segregate White Americans and Native Americans, there was a lot of joint recognition upon their return. The Oklahoma Governor came to see the return of the 36th ID at their port of disembarkation in New York and thank them for their service. The unit then paraded through several towns in Texas and Oklahoma as a whole unit to hundreds of supportive citizens. Newspapers and other media outlets lauded their achievements and wartime service. On the other hand, Black Oklahomans received almost nothing at all by way of celebration. They could only be part of units outside the two Oklahoma heavy divisions, so they received no parades through their home state. Black service members just returned. As a result of Oklahoma's early twentieth-century racial prejudices, race-based legislation, and animosity regarding black communities, there is little to no source material regarding the return of black servicemembers. Even black-owned newspapers such as the *Black Dispatch* seemed quiet on the subject. However, Black Oklahoma veterans came back reinvigorated in an unexpected way. The war gave them the confidence to stand up for themselves as a group and fight for their rights as Americans.

As a result of the Army's policy of segregating Black American troops into their own units, the Army only established two all-black combat divisions, the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions. Most Black American service members found themselves in various labor and support units, including stevedore and service support battalions. Most Oklahoma Black draftees and

volunteers had been placed in one category or the other. Instead of being singularly Oklahoma Black experiences, their stories blended with the collective story of Black troops into a singular ethnic story. Despite their treatment stateside, the members of the Black units signed up with the hopes of achieving higher social status after the conclusion of the war, respect as Americans, and the defense of their communities.

The 92nd Division, National Army, Colored, was organized in October 1917 across numerous camps and cantonments: Camps Funston, Grant, Dodge, Upton, Meade, and Dix. The division constituted Black draftees from across the United States. The division instituted its historical emblem of the American Bison on a field of green. They eventually received the nickname "Buffalo Soldiers." On a timeline similar to the two Texas-Oklahoma divisions, the 92nd landed in France in June and July 1918. Once in France, the division trained at the 11th Training Area until it was called to act as the reserve component of the 1st American Army Corps and various French units until its reconstitution after the armistice.[175]

The 93rd Division, National Army, Colored, formed at Camp Stuart, Newport News, Virginia, in December 1917. While the Black soldiers in the division originated from many States, the bulk came from Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Washington, D.C. Their emblem, a blue French helmet superimposed on a black circle. Upon the unit's activation, Brigadier General Roy Hoffman, former 1st Oklahoma Infantry Regiment commander, took command of the division in December 1917.[176]

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[175] *Brief Histories of Divisions, U.S. Army 1917*-1918 (Washington D.C.; War Department, 1921), 84.
[176] Center of Military History, *Order of Battle: American Expeditionary Forces* Volume 2, 437.

The 93rd Division consisted of two brigades of infantry. The 185th Brigade is most notable for the infantry regiments associated within its ranks. The 369th Infantry Regiment was nicknamed the Harlem Hellfighters, and the 370th Infantry Regiment was the Black Devils. The 371st and 372nd Infantry Regiments constituted the 186th Brigade. The 93rd, along with BG Hoffman, arrived in Brest, France, in December 1917, shortly after their activation, half a year before the two Texas-Oklahoma divisions. Upon arriving in France, the AEF placed all four Infantry regiments under various French commands, and the headquarters unit integrated with the American 1st and 42nd Divisions. Since the division was never reconstituted, the legacies of the 93rd live on as memories through the individual infantry regiments. All regiments participated in numerous engagements, including the operations targeting the St. Mihiel salient and Meuse-Argonne objectives.[177]

Considering that the United States became a recognized superpower after the conclusion of the Great War, some may say that it was a righteous war. Those individuals the government ordered to fight had a different view, but there was a job that had to be done, so they went and accomplished it. Even though the Great War has been overshadowed by World War II, Vietnam, and the Global War on Terror, its legacies remain entrenched in modern society. American Indians could receive citizenship if sought out after the 1924 Citizenship Act, and various immigrant populations scattered throughout Oklahoma showcased that despite the various forms of harassment received on the home front, particularly German-Americans, they deserved respect as not just people but Americans. Contemporary veterans would not enjoy their benefits today without the decades-long political battles between Great War veterans and the federal government. However, racial tensions between Black and White Oklahomans remained

[177] Ibid, 86.

extremely high in the years immediately following the war and occasionally spilled over into racially charged violence. As a culminating event regarding the relations between the Black Oklahoma community, including many war veterans, and White Oklahomans, a significant clash because of racial violence was the May 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The violence in Europe finally ended for Oklahoma in 1918, but more intimate and local conflicts escalated.

CHAPTER 3: THE OKLAHOMA HOMEFRONT

Over 90,000 male Sooners would be sent to fight on the land, sea, and air over the hellish landscape of war-torn Europe while simultaneously, much was still happening on the Oklahoma home front, too. The United States had previously decided to declare national neutrality publicly and denied the need for national readiness in the wake of President Wilson's declaration of war as a precaution, which led to a massive undertaking to mobilize an unprepared population.[178] Oklahoma reflected the national standing of preparedness regardless of purported stances and wartime affiliations. Industry, agriculture, and public policy became more crucial for creating a nation capable of building and maintaining wartime readiness while continuously feeding its prime workforce to the military. Oklahoma was quick to respond to that call.

Not only did Oklahoma begin to take economic and political steps to prepare the state for total war, but it also encouraged and supported the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Student Army Training Corp organizations to prepare its young men as future leaders for the American Expeditionary Forces.

The Wilson Administration feared that such a decentralized method of managing all sectors of American industry and business would make the country unable to fully defend itself or effectively attend to the defense of any future allies. On June 3, 1916, the United States passed the National Defense Act, which established the Council of National Defense (CND). The intention of the CND was to coordinate all the United States' industries and resources for the

[178] Oklahoma State Council of Defense. Sooners in the War: Official Report of the Oklahoma State Council of Defense From May,' I9T7, to January 1, 1919, Containing the War Activities of the State of Oklahoma. Edited by William T. Lampe, Oklahoma City. I (March 17, 1919), Stratton De. Brooks Collection, University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections.

National Security and well-being of the country.[179] Placed under the authority of the Secretary of War, the CND centralized the control and organization of several federal agencies. Following the National Defense Act, the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Labor, Commerce, and Agriculture departments now fell under the Secretary of War's office.

In conjunction with the establishment of the CND, the Wilson administration authorized the founding of the Civilian Advisory Commission. The Advisory Commission was created to represent matters related to transportation, labor, general industry, finance, mining, merchandise, and medicine.[180] Like the Council of National Defense, its authority was wide-reaching but not very deep. At least federally, the council's power was limited, but the states' councils of defense ended up being a much different story as each council's reach was vast compared to its federal counterpart.

Acting on the suggestion of the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, the individual states developed state-run councils of defense, mimicking the national organization. With all haste, Governor Robert L. Williams established the Oklahoma State Council of Defense immediately following Secretary Baker's recommendation. As per Governor Williams's instructions as well, individual counties and districts established councils to engender further, more efficient methods of coordinating industry, agriculture, and military recruitment. However, one aspect of Oklahoma's councils was somewhat unique to Oklahoma among other state councils. The Oklahoma legislature had adjourned prior to the establishment of the Oklahoma State Council of

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[179] U.S. Congress. *U.S. Statutes at Large, Volume 39 -1916, 64th Congress*. United States, -1916, 1915. Periodical. https://www.loc.gov/item/llsl-v39/. 649.
[180] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2004), 115.

Defense (OSCD) and did not reconvene until 1919.[181] Therefore, the Oklahoma councils conducted all activities through directives of the Governor and not the legislature. While unorthodox, this was not illegal.

On July 3, 1917, a notice went out from Williams to the postmaster of each county requesting they submit the names of individuals who should serve on the councils. Once established, Governor Williams notified the members of the lower councils that the intent of the county councils was to "provide a medium through which the citizens of each community can cooperate in the task of 'helping win the war.'"[182] The Executive Council of the OSCD, headed by the Governor, was an amalgamation of bankers, academics, industry specialists, and agricultural experts. With the state legislature's adjournment, the councils issued their mandates and proclamations as executive orders under the authority of the state governor; each county council had authority over its constituents for the entirety of the war, after which each council was dissolved.

President of the University of Oklahoma Stratton Brooks, Professor of Journalism at the University of Oklahoma, Professor Chester H. Westfall, and the President of the Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College in Stillwater, Oklahoma, make up the list of academics appointed to the Oklahoma State Council of Defense. The strong presence of both public academic institutions on the council ensured that the state's intellectuals had significant influence

[181] William I. Lampe. *Tulsa in the World War* (Tulsa; Tulsa Country Historical Society, 1919), 59.
[182] O.A. Hilton, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, "The Oklahoma Council of Defense and the First World War," (Oklahoma Historical Society; Oklahoma City, 1942), 22.

and communicated on behalf of the state between the federal government and public institutions responsible for educating the masses and becoming army officer factories.[183]

While the centralization of control over the production of food, munitions, and anything related to the war effort was the primary focus of the lower councils, the creation of pro-war propaganda was left to the federal government. Still, Oklahoma was enthusiastically engaged in publishing and distributing all federal propaganda. The Oklahoma state, county, and community councils never created their own propaganda. They merely worked closely with propaganda-producing institutions such as the Food Administration, Liberty Loan, Treasury Department, Shipping Board, and the Committee on Public Information (CPI).[184] Propaganda distribution was vital in convincing Oklahomans which side of the war was morally right --the Allies--while providing plenty of evidence to suggest the other side --the Central Powers-- as demonic entities that needed to be wholly and entirely destroyed, root and stem.

On April 13, 1917, President Wilson signed the Committee on Public Information into existence through Executive Order 2594. The CPI was a joint venture of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels.[185] The CPI was entrusted with three vital services: the creation and distribution of the United States Government's educational material designed to maintain the population's morale, the release of generalized news on U.S. activities, and the censorship of any activities or publications critical of the war effort.[186]

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[183] Michael C. Morton, *Cooperation and Conflict: A Case Study in Harmony and Discord in Cleveland County, Oklahoma, 1889-1959* (Norman; University of Oklahoma, 1980), 18.
[184] Hilton, *Council of Defense*, 24.
[185] Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the United States was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (Progressive Press, 2009), 218.
[186] https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/related-records/rg-63-cpi-preliminary-inventory.pdf, accessed February 2, 2023.

The Committee on Public Information is an American transmutation of Great Britain's Wellington House, established in September 1914.[187] Wellington House was where the British Foreign Office formed the War Propaganda Bureau. Ivor Nicholson stated that Wellington Houses' purpose was to distribute carefully crafted "books, pamphlets, government publications, speeches and so forth dealing with the war, its origin, and its history."[188] It was a government-authorized subterfuge that placed "articles and interviews designed to influence public opinion in the world's newspapers and magazines, especially in America."[189]

Arkansas, Oklahoma's neighboring state, also pushed a robust public information campaign. Arkansas's major newspapers typically printed large, sometimes full-page, advertisements asking people to buy Liberty Bonds. They included inflammatory rhetoric such as implying its readers slackers and cowards if they did not participate in the bond buying program and compared not buying a bond to operating a German rifle to use on Allied service members. The propaganda pushed through Oklahoma and Arkansas media made purchasing Liberty Bonds a morality issue, and a matter of reputation. Not purchasing bonds literally left one open to charges of anti-Americanism.[190]

During this time, Oklahoma encouraged women to found and administer their own committees as a part of the State Council of Defense, an act which many did, in fact, complete. Through these women-run committees, female leaders encouraged civic duties for local women to support the war effort better. On January 1, 1918, *The Daily Oklahoman* published an article

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[187] Horace C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 325.

[188] Ibid, 17.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Joseph Carruth. "World War I Propaganda and Its Effects in Arkansas." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (1997): 385–98. https://doi.org/10.2307/40027887, 388-389.

calling all able women to register for "war work."[191] The article even had an application form that could be cut out and submitted via the post office. Mrs. E.Z. Wallower of the Oklahoma City chapter described the purpose of the registration: "It is to create and maintain a list of women trained in various industrial and agricultural tasks currently filled by men."[192] If there was any reason a labor shortage occurred, whether because of a selective service-initiated draft or workplace accident, these women could be called upon to fill the gaps without much, if any, loss to production. As a part of the process, the application asked women to identify and claim their experience or training across dozens of industrial, medical, and tradesmanship areas. Since this was an application and not a direct register, it was not a compulsory program; it was simply an initiative to identify women who could fill in when needed. Aside from maintaining the state economy, industrial and agricultural produced and distributed goods to support the multi-million-man army.

Similar to most large-scale army recruitment efforts, the women's committee for the CND, various chambers of commerce, and local government agencies would put on large drives to encourage widespread civic participation. Like contemporary military recruiters, they even set up displays at high schools across Oklahoma City to increase awareness and young women's access to applications.[193] While women filled multiple roles across dozens of industries, it was their contributions to agricultural assistance that Oklahoma's war-working women wildly succeeded in.

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[191] *The Daily Oklahoman*, "Work of Listing Women of City Opens with New Vigor Tomorrow," January 1, 1918, 3.
[192] Ibid, 3.
[193] Donald E. Houston, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, "'She Would Raise Hens to Aid War': The Contributions of Oklahoma Women during World War I, (OHS, 2003), 337.

On January 19, 1918, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that the head of the Food Administration, Herbert Hoover, published a letter addressed to the young women of the 1918 graduating class from all high schools across the country. This letter was a direct appeal to these women to work in food production and for those attending higher academic institutions to direct their studies to agricultural science, chemistry, and physiology.[194] As a result of women's war work, a 1917 annual agricultural report indicated that around 20,000 participants canned over 800,000 jars of fruits and vegetables across Oklahoma counties.[195]

Aside from agricultural work, the progressive politics of the time and assistance from the Women's Committee on the State Council of Defense made vocational training for women more accessible. The programs instructed these women in typewriting, stenography, and bookkeeping. World War I had created a need for more educated and trained women, and the women's rights movement was working in tandem to chart a more equitable future for all American women. While these women workers focused on essential office administrative positions, agricultural work, and industrial work, the medical field needed skilled workers to fill the roles of nurses, physicians, and volunteers as readily as the rest of the economic sectors.

Though it was labeled progressive for massive amounts of women to enter the workforce and push for women's suffrage, the meaning of progressivism in the 1910s has different connotations than the meaning in the twenty-first century. The policies under the title "progressive" seemed paradoxical and often the antithesis to each other. Oklahoma and its surrounding Western states promoted cultural empathy in conjunction with racist policies favored by eugenics research. The most fervent topic was the positive public opinion regarding

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[194] *The Daily Oklahoman*, "Hoover is After Help from Women," (1918), 38.
[195] *The Daily Oklahoman*, "Million Quarts of Fruit Canned," 20 January 1918, 17.

anti-immigration laws.[196] So, while Oklahoma had some very progressive strides, even by today's standards, it was tied to a darker varient of what was called progressive at the time, including forced sterilization laws.[197]

By the Summer of 1918, the Spanish Flu began to rage through Oklahoma, dangerously exposing the needs of the medical community that was stripped of staff for the military. At the start of the war, with the need for medical support service members, over 500 of Oklahoma's physicians volunteered for military service.[198] The War Department then poached almost half of the available nurses within the state. This drastic reduction in medical staff stretched the state's ability to take care of the sick, quarantine the infected, and isolate the bodies of deceased Influenza victims. Aside from having a general lack of facilities and medical staff to combat the sickness, the mobilization of troops and personnel for the war effort greatly exacerbated the rate of exposure to the influenza virus. Thousands of people moved in and out of the state for military training, mobilization, and demobilization throughout 1918 and 1919, making it virtually impossible to quickly identify and isolate infected persons. With the war still raging, the likelihood of minimizing the movement of people throughout the state was as low as it could possibly go. A second threat ensued, and due to the already depleted manpower and resources, there was little the people of Oklahoma could do other than hope and wait it out.

In the newspapers, it was common to see flu death statistics displayed right beside servicemembers' deaths in the battle overseas. As thousands of people got sick with the Spanish

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[196] David Wrobel, *America's West: A History, 1890-1950* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2017), 57.
[197] Donald K. Pickens, "The Sterilization Movement: The Search for Purity in Mind and State." *Phylon (1960-)* 28, no. 1 (1967): 78–94. https://doi.org/10.2307/274128, 87.
[198] Nigel A. Sellars, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, "'Almost Hopeless in the Wake of the Storm': The 1918 Spanish Flu Epidemic in Oklahoma (OHS; Oklahoma City, 2001), 49.

Flu, the traditional seasonal variant was congruently present, causing confusion and, at times, panic among those who knew the infected. Only time would tell which strain a loved one had carried into the home. As the virus began to spread rapidly, schools enacted closures in an effort to reduce the exposure of children and families. On October 10, 1918, El Reno, Guthrie, and Cushing school districts closed their doors for the duration of the epidemic.[199] Some areas, such as El Reno, banned public gatherings.[200] Other regions of Oklahoma took similar actions to combat the Spanish Flu. In 1919, the Oklahoma Health Department published that there may have been as many as 150,000 Spanish Flu cases and at least 7,500 deaths.[201]

Despite the rampant sickness running through the state, the War Department and its Councils of Defense continued their mobilization efforts. Wishing to join the war effort and train personnel for future military service, the large state universities became directly involved. The University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (OAMC) began military instruction programs. While the army program was new to OU, it was not a new venture for Oklahoma A&M. As part of the Morrill Act of 1862, the recently founded collegiate institutions required its curriculum to provide military tactics instruction. As a wave of patriotic fervor began to consume citizens across the country after Wilson's war declaration and years of social conditioning issued by the CPI, so too did it find its way onto many university campuses.[202]

In April 1917, the University of Oklahoma (OU) Student Body President Josh Lee held a mass gathering of the male student population to discuss how they could meaningfully contribute

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[199] *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 11, 1918, 4.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid, 56.
[202] "Morrill Act (1862)." 2021. National Archives. August 16, 2021. https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/morrill-act#transcript.

to the war effort. The students eventually settled on creating a program that would train students in basic military skills. With the permission of University President Stratton D. Brooks, an all-volunteer student regiment was formed. This program was short-lived, however, and ended the next month at the close of the semester as students left campus. As the war raged in Europe, the US War Department requested that OU establish a military curriculum. In academic year 1917-1918, the Oklahoma State Board of Regents for Education ordered all male students to participate in a two-year military training program.[203]

After war was declared, the student body of OU voted to create a military training program at the university; President Brooks proactively began requesting the needed qualified personnel to serve as instructors, material to train the students with a proper military science curriculum, and equipment for students to train on. Brooks received a reply telegram from the Adjutant General's office at the War Department in Washington D.C. on April 17, 1917, stating they understood President Brooks' need for military personnel to instruct the cadets. However, due to the limited number of qualified officers and non-commissioned officers needed for the war effort, no military personnel would be sent at that time. [204] In the meantime, a volunteer regiment was formed to begin military instruction in drills and ceremonies in mid-April. On April 16, 1917, the regiment conducted its first drill day. The regiment published a training schedule showing an hour and a half of drill on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, while it

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[203] National Parks Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, OMB No. 1024-0018 (Washington D.C., National Parks Service, 2015) https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/15000866.pdf, accessed February 23, pg 9
National Parks Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, pg 9.

[204] Letter from Adjutant General's Office, President Stratton D. Brooks Collection, Box 12, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

reserved Tuesdays and Thursdays for classroom instruction on army tactics.[205] In just over three weeks, the University of Oklahoma Volunteer Regiment consisted of 12 companies; it made nine infantry-focused with roughly 80 students per company, a medical company of 35 personnel, a signal corps contingent of 160 personnel, and an engineering contingent of 40, bringing the told of student volunteers to 955 men. On May 11, the VR disbanded at the close of the semester. During the summer, the university administration continued to write to the War Department and Secretary Newton Baker directly, requesting men and materials to make the program more effective.

Initially voluntary, the recently established Student Army Training Corp (SATC) was made compulsory for all male students at both OU and OSU. While the federal creation of the SATC program satisfied the various student bodies, it served as more than just a military training pipeline for future servicemen and officers. Like the selective service process, it was designed to identify individuals who should continue their studies and those who could be drafted to fill in the gaps in the units overseas. As young men dropped out of colleges and universities at an accelerated rate to volunteer for military service, the federal government recognized that depending on how long the war was going to last, there was going to be a shortage of trained engineers, chemists, physicists, mechanics, mathematicians, physicians, and a host of other essential careers needed to keep the country operating at peak efficiency.[206]

As the two Oklahoma universities embraced the SATC program, they began to set up a military curriculum that consisted of practical drills and ceremonies and classroom-based

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[205] Edwin K. Wood, *The University of Oklahoma in World War* (Norman; University of Oklahoma, 1923), 12.
[206] *Sooners and War Service*, "Students Army Training Corps", August 15, 1918, 1, University of Oklahoma Archives Record Group 55: ROTC / Military, Box 1.

instruction on small-unit tactics in the field.[207] For each student enrolled in the program, the federal government financially compensated the universities $900 to cover the cost of room and board.[208] It was a mutually beneficial arrangement; the universities got a continuous supply of money, allowing them to stay open, and the federal government got fresh supplies of trained, college-educated men for wartime service as officers. Once male students entered university, the school inundated them with pro-war messaging and signed up for their courses built around the prescribed military curriculum.

The curriculum consisted of skills, including outside battlefield tactics, which had been determined to be vital to the war effort. The University of Oklahoma, in particular, had thirteen courses across seven different departments with the direct purpose of training soldiers, training male students who expected to become soldiers, and students planning on filling in the service gaps in the local industry.[209] Such courses included first aid, orthopedic surgery, wireless telegraphy, military field engineering, gas engine work, oxy-acetylene welding, current events studies, stenography, and various other correspondence courses for soldiers currently in the military but seeking a commission.[210]

To rehearse, drill, and execute military training, the Student Military Regiment needed an area on campus to conduct its activities. To fulfill this demand, the construction of the Armory began during the war in 1918, but it was not completed until 1919. The Armory has since served

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[207] The University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) in Edmond did not have an active SATC program, nor is there evidence to suggest they sent students to establish SATC programs.
[208] David A. Levy, *The University of Oklahoma: A History*, *Volume II 1917-1950* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 16.
[209] *The Sooner 1918*, 24.
[210] Levy, *The University of* Oklahoma, 24.

as a multipurpose drill and academic space for over one hundred years.[211] After the conclusion of the war, the SATC program transitioned to ROTC. Once federalized, the University of Oklahoma ROTC program was given 60 horses, nine artillery pieces, tractors, trucks, observation cars, and a wireless telegraph set.[212] But while still the SATC program, both OAMC and OU students' corps had to utilize the equipment that was available.

While being a member of the SATC was not a choice while attending either of these universities for freshmen and sophomores, it did not guarantee an officer's commission to every graduate. However, even though SATC did not promise commissions to every member, it was still the best way for a current undergraduate to serve as an officer. The Oklahoma State Legislature frequently urged graduating high school students to attend university, join the Student Army Training Corps, and earn a vital degree.[213] The success of the state and nation depended on every essential participant in the war effort, whether the student served as a soldier, sailor, marine, aviator, or pursued a civil career.

By the war's end, Oklahoma A&M had 1,141 students who had served in the United States military.[214] Unfortunately, 28 of those former students died in overseas service and did not return home. They would be laid to rest overseas with their comrades in arms. The University of Oklahoma had over 2,300 students, former students, and faculty who served in various parts

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[211] OU Receives Gift to Support ROTC, University of Oklahoma, accessed October 20, 2020, https://www.ou.edu/web/news_events/articles/news_2018/ou-receives-transformative-gift--in-support-of-rotc-programs#:~:text=The%20OU%20Armory%20was%20built,barracks%2C%20was%20demolished%20in%202015.

[212] National Parks Service, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,*10.

[213] *Sooners and War Service*, "Students Army Training Corps", August 15, 1918, 2, University of Oklahoma Archives Record Group 55: ROTC / Military, Box 1.

[214] Library.okstate.edu. Accessed March 31, 2023. https://library.okstate.edu/search-and-find/collections/digital-collections/oklahoma-a-and-m-world-war-i/history-of-the-rotc-at-oamc.

of the United States armed forces and lost 24 students, former students, and faculty to the war.[215] To show gratitude and honor towards Oklahoma service members, both past and present, the Oklahoma universities hold several military appreciation games throughout each academic year and utilize the ROTC programs to serve as the color guard during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner before every game.

One problem regarding the training and placement of new officers nationally arose around Black American officers. In a similar fashion to the rest of the country, Black Americans in Oklahoma did not usually attend university because of rules and regulations surrounding admission as well as general opportunities allotted based on their socioeconomic status. No matter the reasons for this lack of representation at the universities, it resulted in precisely zero participation of Black Oklahomans in the Student Army Training Corps programs. This severely limited the chances of attaining an officer's commission, as the SATC program was the surest path. For the National Army, Major General Leonard Wood reportedly had disdain for non-white officers. As a part of the Plattsburg experiment, Theodore Roosevelt suggested that a handful of qualified Black Americans be included. MG Wood dismissed the idea proposed by President Roosevelt and stated that such officer candidates "must be white."[216] Eventually, the War Department established Fort Des Moines in Iowa to train black officers to oversee black regiments. Fort Des Moines had trained and commissioned 639 Black officers by the war's end. In similar circumstances, another officer training camp was established in Puerto Rico, which graduated 700 Puerto Rican officers. Oklahoma reportedly had two residents receive officer commissions through the Fort Des Moines officer training program: Hannibal B. Taylor of

[215] Levy, *The University of Oklahoma*, 18.
[216] John W. Chambers, *To Raise an Army* (New York; The Free Press, 1987), 93 and 158.

Guthrie and Seymour E. Williams of Muscogee. Both junior officers eventually joined their various units at Camp Funston, located within the boundaries of Fort Riley, Kansas, just south of Manhattan.[217]

While African Americans continued to encounter prejudice, immigrants and foreign nationals from European nations began a significant expansion into the Plains States in the early twentieth century. During this period, Oklahoma had many German, Italian, Eastern European, and Russian Jewish immigrants residing within its borders, occupying rural and urban population centers. While the United States experienced an immigration explosion during the final couple of decades of the 19th century and the first decade and a half of the 20th century, hundreds of thousands of immigrants would travel westward towards and into Oklahoma after their arrival to the United States. As settlement was being encouraged in the Plains States and the upper Midwest, many European Immigrants took root in the heartland of the US. Between 1870 and 1910, German Immigrants, including first- and second-generation Americans, totaled around 10,000 in Oklahoma (according to the 1910 census).[218]

Despite concentrating around central and north-central Oklahoma, most Germans preferred to work the land and resided in more rural settings. However, this does not necessarily mean they all chose to live in those areas. Like most people, not all immigrants with the same country of origin wanted to live the same lifestyle. While most did work in agriculture, a portion

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[217] Emmet J. Scott, *Scott's official history of the American Negro in the World War. A Complete and authentic narration, from official sources, of the participation of American soldiers of the Negro race in the World War for democracy…a full account of the war work organizations of colored men and women and other civilian activities, including the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A. and the War camp community service, with official summary of treaty of peace and League of Nations covenant* (Chicago, Homewood Press, 1919), Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/19011646/, 480-481.

[218] Douglas Hale, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 53, Number 2, Summer 1975, "European Immigrants in Oklahoma (OHS, Oklahoma City, 1975), 184.

of the Germans chose more cosmopolitan settings in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The German population would become the largest immigrant population within the State.

As tensions rose in Europe and escalated into a full-blown war, Germany came to be viewed more critically in the U.S. The attitudes of local Oklahomans may previously have been positive towards their German-speaking neighbors, but after the propaganda campaigns imposed by the Committee on Public Information and later enforced by the Oklahoma State, County, and District Councils of Defense, attitudes would considerably shift against the Germans. The situation for German Immigrants in Oklahoma became even more precarious after the US Congress passed the Espionage Act in June of 1917. The Sedition Act would follow in May of 1918. Both Acts had the effect of turning Americans against many of their immigrant neighbors.

The Espionage Act of 1917 was intended to "punish acts of interference with foreign relations, the neutrality, and the foreign commerce of the United States, to punish espionage, and to better enforce the criminal laws of the United States, and for other purposes."[219] The punishment for most of the crimes dictated within this document was death, with the lighter sentence being imprisonment for no less than 30 years. The discernment between offenses committed under this act during times of war or peace generally made no difference; thus, they held the same sentence. The Sedition Act of 1918 was vastly more authoritarian in limiting Americans' freedoms. Passed as a supplement to or an extension of the Espionage Act, the Sedition Act directly attacked Americans' constitutional First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and expression. Under the Sedition Act, it was now illegal to incite disloyalty within the military, with the definition of disloyalty being exceptionally subjective regarding speech. It also

[219] (Department of State. 9/1789- (Predecessor) and National Archives and Records Administration. Office of the Federal Register. 4/1/1985- 1917).

became illegal to use in either speech or written form any language that was disloyal to the government, the Constitution, the military, or the national flag to advocate for strikes on labor production or to support countries in a state of war with the United States.[220]

Both congressional acts turned neighbor on neighbor and placed some American citizens in a perpetual state of paranoia and fear, not against belligerent nations but against family and friends who might be spies plotting the destruction of the United States from within. The multilayered Oklahoma Council of Defense enforced these acts rigorously and immediately took action to begin seeking out supposed violators within their midst. The state council, and by extension all local councils, immediately began to initiate loyalty oaths and pledges and eventually printed loyalty cards that became a requirement for Oklahomans to fill out and submit to verify their citizenship status and not plan anything nefarious.[221]

Since the governor created the Oklahoma Councils of Defense through mandates and not from the approval of the state legislature but with the approval of public opinion, the councils had minimal restrictions on implementing the loyalty pledges and investigating potential violators of both acts. Their own record, provided in the 1919 *Sooners in the War* report, stated that the councils of defense immediately created a state-appointed and directed "secret service." The purpose was for the organization to serve as an investigatory branch under the direct control of the State Council of Defense. The secret servicemen made "quiet" investigations into anything they might construe as violations of the Espionage or Sedition Acts.[222] The citizens of Oklahoma

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[220] Christina L. Boyd, *The First Amendment Encyclopedia,* "Sedition Act of 1918 (1918)," https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1239/sedition-act-of-1918#:~:text=Sedition%20Act%20of%201918%20(1918)&text=1912%2C%20public%20domain),The%20Sedition%20Act%20of%201918%20curtailed%20the%20free%20speech%20rights,and%20expanded%20limitations%20on%20speech, accessed February 23, 2023.
[221] Oklahoma State Council of Defense, *Sooners in the War*, 1919, 10.
[222] Ibid.

mostly saw this type of government oversight as a public good. Almost all the investigations brought to the State councils came from hearsay, false statements, or paranoid delusions among the general population. In addition, the OSCD also created its own version of the CPI led by OU Professor of Journalism Chester Westfall. While not necessarily developing its own propaganda, the State War Information Bureau excelled in spreading war work information and telling stories of hard-working Oklahomans giving all they had for the war effort.

Aside from encouraging and, at times, guilting Oklahomans into enlisting in the U.S. Army and its sister services, the public information section of the OSCD was a primary driver in encouraging the purchasing of war bonds. Oklahoma males who enlisted or drafted physically filled the army ranks; the civilian population was expected to purchase bonds. *Daily Oklahoman* headlines for the first Liberty Loan read, "Buy bonds of the Slacker Wagon will get you!"[223] In view of the public, various towns erected makeshift jails outside banks and other financial institutions to encourage those individuals cashing or depositing money to spend it on bonds or Red Cross donations as an alternative. If the patron refused to buy bonds or donate money, the public forced them into the slacker pens, constantly surrounded by people walking past, until they changed their minds and put their money towards the war effort. After proper payment, the CNDs released them. One of the famous pens in Oklahoma was located in Norman. The *Daily Oklahoman* reported one incident involving a wealthy man who refused to purchase bonds, at least initially. He was removed from his home and forced into the pen for a small amount of time. He gave in only after hours of public humiliation and arguments from the Cleveland County Council of Defense.[224]

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[223] O.A. Hilton," Councils," 33.
[224] *The Daily Oklahoman*, "Slacker Pen latest idea in Work of Strong Arm Squads," June 09, 1918, 23.

Regarding the State Councils of Defense, Oklahoma was not the sole state with an established defense committee. Other Plains States, such as Iowa and Minnesota, formed their own versions of the Council of Defense. In May 1917, just one month after entrance into the war, Governor William L. Harding and his executive committee announced in newspapers across the state that the selection of over 2,500 men to participate in county and district councils in support of the Executive Council.[225] In Iowa, the organization's name was the same as in Oklahoma. However, in Minnesota, instead of naming the organization the Council of Defense, the Minnesota state legislature went with another approach. On March 31, 1917, Minnesota State Senator George H. Sullivan issued a state declaration calling forth a group of seven members to form a commission led by Governor Joseph A. A. Burquist.[226] They named their CND subordinate organization the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety. All three of these states' defense initiatives served the same purpose. To enforce loyalty to the American cause and put down any form of resistance contrary to the national objective.

However, while Minnesota and Iowa had their own councils, there is seemingly little easily accessible published information on their machinations throughout the war. Oklahoma remains unique as several local County Councils of Defense have authored and published their county histories, and the Oklahoma State Council of Defense has created its own monthly magazine. While some of the language used throughout the limited documents published by the Iowa and Minnesota variants echoes the absolutism espoused by the Oklahoma CND and had

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[225] *The Des Moines Register*, "Entire State Now is Organized for National Defense," May 29, 1917, 1.

[226] Matt Reicher, "Minnesota Commission of Public Safety." MNopedia, Minnesota Historical Society. http://www.mnopedia.org/group/minnesota-commission-public-safety (accessed March 24, 2023).

plenty of arrests of citizens who allegedly violated either the Espionage Act or Sedition Act, there are fewer reports of such extreme enforcement.

The newly implemented congressional acts and Oklahoma's hard line in implementing them would go on to cause much distrust among the ten thousand or so German Immigrants, in addition to making the lives of German Americans far more complex. With the state's promotion of vigilantism, ostensibly unpatriotic Americans began to be hunted down by their neighbors and fellow Oklahomans. One of the extreme cases of anti-German hysteria among the local populace was the case of Henry A. Reimer of Collinsville, Oklahoma. At fifty-some years old, he was hardly a young man or a viable physical threat. However, Reimer was a staunch advocate for German language instructional programs. Unfortunately, his limited English language skills made him an ineffective orator, and his enthusiasm was taken as anti-American, pro-German sentiment.[227] After Reimer took down the American flag hanging in his home window, which he was publicly pressured to put up in the first place, the local council of defense chose to act and promptly arrested him for disloyalty on 19 April 1918. Later that evening, a mob of over fifty concerned citizens stormed the jail and dragged Reimer to the Home Guard Armory on the second floor of Collinsville City Hall.[228] The mob strung him up and proceeded to lynch him because of his alleged anti-Americanism. As Reimer continued to sway back and forth after the chair was kicked out from underneath him, he entered a state of semiconsciousness.[229] Fortunately for Reimer, the local police arrived, and after some discussion with the attempted executioners, explaining that the prisoner would receive a fair trial, Reimer was cut down and

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[227] Dalton Reimer, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Autumn 2018 (OHS, Oklahoma City, 2018), 281.
[228] Reimer, "German Immigrants," 282.
[229] Record Card from the ACLU, H.C. Peterson Collection, Box 23, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

would eventually recover. After months of an investigation led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the case was dropped due to insufficient evidence, as noted in an FBI report published on August 1, 1918.[230] While the whole incident was barbaric and unjustified, this was one of the more positive stories since the lynching did not result in Reimer's death. Others, mainly German immigrants, would not find themselves as fortunate as Henry Reimer.

On March 25, 1918, a German Immigrant, Joe Sring, who worked as a waiter in a Tulsa, Oklahoma restaurant, was overheard promoting his sympathetic view of the German cause and his desire for all American servicemen in France to be killed by German forces. All the local and national attacks on German immigrants and the public violence in response to anything remotely German had powered Sring's frustrations and prompted his public remarks. S.L. Miller, a local Tulsa Council of Defense special officer, overheard the comments and promptly shot Sring three times, killing him instantly.[231] S.L. Miller was arrested but was released on March 28th after Tulsa judge Justice Lee Daniel dropped the charges, citing there was sufficient evidence and eyewitness testimony to justify the shooting.[232] The escalation and use of force on such critics of the national war effort illustrate the successful propagandizing by the CPI and perpetuated various councils of defense.

Despite the seeming public approval and even the approval of the Tulsa County Council of Defense for the actions of vigilantes, the County Council published an article condemning the attacks in the April 19, 1918, edition of the Tulsa Tribune. The article, a statement from the council directed to the public that the "legally" recognized council of defense disavows any form

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[230] Ibid.
[231] Record Card from the ACLU, H.C. Peterson Collection, Box 23, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.
[232] *Durant Daily Democrat*, "Tulsa Judge Frees Slayer of Traitor Is Complimented," March 28th, 1918, 2.

of mob rule and the rule of law will continue to be maintained by the council-appointed Home Guard, the all-volunteer, quick reaction force formed after the federalization of the National Guard.[233] The council further elaborated, "we take a firm stand to conform and suppress mob rule and that we ask the aid of officers and that we will employ such other means as may be necessary to see that American principles of government are not torn down."[234]

It is almost ironic that an Oklahoma Council of Defense would issue such a statement with such seeming sincerity, not realizing the expression of their own hypocrisy. The councils, created through directives from the State Governor without approval or ratification through the state legislature, are the bodies elected by the people to make laws. The State Council chose the board and council members. The people did not select them. With the State legislature not involved unless in session recalled by the Governor, and with the backing of the Governor's office, the county councils of defense had unchecked power in how they dealt with citizens and non-citizens alike, in addition to how they chose to interpret and act upon any state or federal laws.

After the declaration of war, the entirety of the Oklahoma National Guard, the 1st Oklahoma Regiment, reported to Camp Bowie and then traveled to Europe to fight on the frontlines. Still, many more men who had yet to enlist or register for selective service remained in the State. The Secretary of War, Newton Baker, and General Enoch Crowder, the Judge Advocate General of the United States Army, proposed a solution to creating an efficient process for getting all American men between ages eighteen and forty-five to register. Their solution required each state governor to appoint county boards of control. Baker emphasized that the

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[233] *The Tulsa Tribune*, "Mob Rule," November 19, 1917, 7.
[234] Ibid.

county sheriff should act as the board executive officer, the county clerk as the custodian of record keeping, and the county medical officer as the person directly in charge of executing the physical examinations of the men registering.[235] The idea behind this initiative intended to give the board members a familiar and neighborly face to make the registration process more comfortable and inviting. This methodology of using familiar faces to entice citizens into compliance would be reused throughout American history and even remains in use contemporarily in the 2020s.

The institution of the draft and the means of conscription led to the creation of cards that an individual would receive after registering for Selective Service. This identification card was the first federally issued ID in the country's history.[236] This had a profound effect on the immigrant population, both naturalized citizens and those holding non-citizen status. As a result of requiring identification for all male residents, in July of 1917, the US State and Labor Departments altered the country's most restrictive immigration policy.[237] "It was now a requirement that all aliens entering the United States had to have passports and visas."[238]

Oklahoma needed to move quickly to draft 15,564 men in the first draft alone for both Regular Army and National Guard billets.[239] Individual counties quickly started organizing the necessary boards required to accomplish the enormous undertaking set out by the federally-run Selective Service Department. Tulsa County began the proceedings for its selective service board

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[235] Chambers, *To Raise an* Army, 181.
[236] Christopher Capozzola, "The Legacies of Citizenship," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4, 2014, 713.
[237] Capozzola, "Legacies of Citizenship," 5.
[238] Ibid.
[239] *The Edmond Sun*, "Number of Men to be Raised in Each State19 July 1917, 2.

in May 1917.[240] The first selection and medical examination board for Tulsa consisted of John H. Simmons, the former mayor of the city of Tulsa, as the Chair, Joe W. Kenton, an attorney, as the first acting secretary, and Dr. S. Dezell Hawley as the acting medical examiner.[241] When registered, each man received his registration card. Like most lists, the count started with one and worked its way up as men continued to show up and register. However, if men failed to register for the draft, the sentence for a judicial conviction had a minimum of no less than one year in prison.[242]

The first draft call selected 254 men from Tulsa County.[243] Despite multiple men in the chosen group having legitimate deferments, the boards denied all of them and forced them to serve regardless. While unfortunate for the men in the first draft call, it would later be rectified by the federal government. The public paid much attention to the Oklahoma men called to serve during every draft. However, the people gave as much, if not more, attention to the number of men selected for service but failed to appear. Newspapers around the country printed tables, commonly titled "slacker tables," meant to illustrate how many men draft dodged from specific regions. In a February 10, 1918, article in the *Daily Oklahoman,* a slacker table appeared after the calling of one of the drafts. Of the 63,810 men called for service, 3,987 failed to show.[244] While this number, representing 6 percent of Oklahoman men failing to report when called to service, seems high, Oklahoma, in general, had a relatively small percentage of draft evaders compared to other states and territories. Even though the Oklahoma county boards and State

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[240] William I. Lampe, *Tulsa County in the World War* (Oklahoma; Tulsa County Historical Society, 1919), 96.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Chambers, *To Raise and Army*, 155.
[243] Lampe*, Tulsa County in the World War*, 98.
[244] *The Daily Oklahoman*, "The Slacker Table," February 10, 1918, 41.

officials ran as efficient a process as possible for selection, the Selective Service Act and the concept of drafting did not sit well with all state inhabitants.

Oklahoma had an enormous undertaking after the national declaration of war. As a newly established state, Governor Williams wanted to eagerly show the rest of the country that Oklahoma belonged as a full member of the union, and he intended to see to it that the state represented the very best of America. As the State encouraged nationalism, patriotism, and propaganda, it readily mobilized all it could for a national war. Universities became officer pipelines, the state created selective service boards to efficiently register men for the first draft since the Civil War, and the state enthusiastically sent off its fighting men. However, Governor Williams and his executive council established several councils of defense and had no intention of recalling the legislative body since the added bureaucracy had the potential for counterproductivity. While purporting American idealism, select state officials created a centralized government because they viewed it as the most efficient means of running a wartime government. Per the Governor's instructions, each council would be responsible for its actions during the war.

In addition, Oklahoma was by no means the only state to form a state Council of National Defense; every state did so during the course of World War I. Out of at least the Plains States, Oklahoma witnessed the most publicized violence among its citizens. From lynching to tarring and feathering and straight-up shootings, even involving members of the councils of defense. It may be possible to attribute this to the already high tensions between two different territories recently joined in statehood made up of different peoples, a widening gap between the poor agricultural workers and urban professions, or the relationships developed by Oklahoma's time

as a former frontier state already filled with violent conflict between the U.S. Army and the state's Native American population.[245]

Even though Oklahoma had a rather dark experience with its connection between state councils of defense and the violence between groups, many positive stories also developed. Oklahoma women could now start taking up positions in the workforce in several industries previously relegated to men. This was unprecedented and unimaginable before the outbreak of war in Europe. While progressivism was already on the rise on the East Coast, locally, it accomplished more in the two years of the Great War than in several previous decades. While the state sent their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons to fight and potentially die in Europe, it became the responsibility of the mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and the remaining men to take up arms for the industrial fight.[246]

As Oklahoma quickly managed to set up programs for getting women into more technical industrial work sectors and sent 90,000 men to the military, an epidemic started that was just as devasting for the state as the first two events. The Spanish flu led to almost 7,500 deaths in 1918. That form of mass casualty causing illness had not been seen before in the state's history as either a state or a borderland territory. While Oklahoma tried to maintain the supply of men to the military without transportation delays resulting from the epidemic, the state also had to shift women from working in agriculture and general industry and convince them to join the medical corps as medical workers or volunteers. As a result of the virus itself, the disease affected people primarily in their twenties and thirties. So not only was there a massive shift in the state's

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[245] Those connections will require further studies of their own to truly determine the relationship between Oklahoma and violence during the First World War.
[246] Donald E. Houston. "'She Would Raise hens to Aid War': The Contributions of Oklahoma Women during World War I." *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 81, Number 3 (Fall 2003), 335.

workforce, but the most at-risk age demographic of the deadliest disease in centuries was the very same group the state relied on to fill in every economic gap.

The propaganda campaigns published by the Oklahoma media and Councils of Defense directly impacted how people treated their fellow Oklahomans. It became popular to publicize stories of people getting tarred and feathered, lynched, murdered, and ostracized as morally corrupt individuals for not purchasing a bond at any available moment. This was not a unique circumstance; the neighboring states of Arkansas and Texas all had stringent public information campaigns and their share of violence. Texas and Arkansas had anti-draft riots too, similar spirit to Oklahoma's Green Corn Rebellion, but not on quite the same scale.[247]

Many activities on the Oklahoma home front had direct connections to the military through troops, medical staff, industrial goods, and agricultural goods. While the councils of defense methods seemed questionable at times, the centralization of the government for the sake of participating in a total war was positive. The Oklahoma men and women who stayed behind, for any number of reasons, had to maintain the State's everyday operations while over five percent of the citizenry was removed for participation in wartime service. After the war concluded, there was an influx of laborers returning to the workforce alongside the thousands of women holding industry positions. At the same time, the economy shrank back due to a lack of need for the quantities being produced. The pain of wartime service was over as quickly as it began; now Oklahomans had to face navigating the economic and social fallout of the war's conclusion.

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[247] Willis, James F. "The Cleburne County Draft War." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1967): 24–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/40018964, 25.

CONCLUSION

As a state that had only been around for ten years before America's entrance into the bloodiest conflict in human history up to that time, Oklahoma experienced several changes across a multitude of socioeconomic and military facets due to the Great War. Oklahoma's experienced service members provided critical military manpower and combat experience to support the allies and fellow Americans on the European battlefield. Some American historians and politicians may see World War I as a largely insignificant and unimportant event in human history, commonly overshadowed by World War II, and had a much more easily told narrative with more precise delineations between right and wrong. As a result, World War I drifted in and out of American public memory. At the same time, World War II currently enjoys whole units in high school history courses, and many large-scale museums reinforce that war's significance to the national story. World War II featured a seemingly more apparent division between the Allies and the enemy and an easy-to-digest dichotomy between "good" and "evil." World War I is not as straightforward or captivating a story. Nonetheless, World War I was a crucial moment in the history of Oklahoma.

This study has brought up several points regarding Oklahoma's involvement in the Great War. Militarily, the war greatly enhanced Oklahoma's ability to provide a significant National Guard presence and house several active military installations across numerous branches of service. Before World War I fired its first shots and before the U.S. military involved itself, Oklahoma had only one Infantry Regiment composed of less than 1000 soldiers, which was more a tightly controlled militia, a remnant of the days of American expansionism and the accompanying clashes between the Anglo-American residents and Native American populations. The war ended up pulling around 90,000 male Sooners from every industry in the state to join

the ranks and sent to fight alongside Allied militaries already engaged on European battlefields. Selective Service drafted over a third of Oklahoma's fighting men rather than them enlisting voluntarily. Almost five percent of the state's population went to fight. With the establishment of the state and county Councils of Defense, Oklahoma maintained its current production levels and increased output during the war years because of the social atmosphere and promotion of civic involvement. However, after the war's conclusion, there was a sharp drop in agricultural prices; the increased output proved short-lived.

The war had little effect on Oklahoma's social scene. Despite the melting pot and social equalizing nature of the U.S. Army, systemic racism continued to permeate Oklahoma culture, and racial tensions worsened because of the war. The federal government tried to further the assimilation of Native peoples through the enticement of immediate citizenship for those men who served. If they sought it out. The disenfranchisement of Black Oklahomans continued, regardless of their involvement within the armed services. In fact, tensions between Black Oklahomans and White Oklahomans only escalated after the war. Black Oklahoman Army veterans experienced respect and pride from the French army and civilians during their European tours, and they came home ready to fight for equal treatment.

Even though the soldiers who participated in integrated units with Native Americans had better relationships with Natives because of their service together, the Oklahoma citizens who remained home operated within the same racially charged framework of the existing social structures. The number of soldiers who developed better attitudes and respect for the people they fought with was not a sizable enough group to enact large-scale change after returning from the war.

After the conclusion of the First World War, the size of Oklahoma's National Guard increased by several regiments. The newly established 45th Infantry Division Headquarters was placed in Oklahoma City, where the 45th Brigade Combat Team Headquarters still sits over 100 years later. The 45th Brigade Combat Team has oversight over several units spanning several states in the Southwestern United States. Coinciding with Oklahoma's massive increase in a standing National Guard Force, the State and federal governments established numerous additional active military installations in the State. Fort Sill is one of them and has continued to expand over the decades. While each base brings to the state its share of operational military units and service members, it also brings a civilian workforce in tow. Tens of thousands of civilian employees, both federal and private contractors, now call Oklahoma home due to the massive increase in military presence in the state that began during World War I. With such a sizeable military footprint, Oklahoma retains a more favorable opinion of the military and its service members.

As Britain and France began their propaganda publications in 1914, with the specific intention of flooding the American media with the righteous cause of the Allies, American public opinion was not quick to turn to favor American involvement in Europe's conflict. After a couple of years of providing influential information to Oklahomans, America entered the war, and some Oklahomans, having been primed by the media, quickly promoted the Allied cause. This led to student gatherings on college campuses, forming the federally authorized Student Army Training Corps, leaving a legacy that lives on through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. Oklahoma's public Universities turned into military training camps that lured prospective young men to attend university and acquire a degree with the hopes of joining the service as an officer. Oklahoma's Reserve Officer Training Corps now has programs at most of the state's more

prominent universities, both public and private. Some of the more prominent universities, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Central Oklahoma, and Oklahoma State University, for example, even have smaller satellite campuses with students at those schools participating in ROTC through the larger programs. In the last decade alone, Oklahoma has had hundreds of students commissioned as Second Lieutenants in the Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Ensigns in the Navy.

The Oklahoma universities with ROTC programs have consistently remained strong and intact through many national conflicts, some of which have been highly unpopular amongst the public, specifically college student-aged citizens throughout the United States. In the wake of the war in Vietnam, some schools across the nation went as far as to decommission or ban ROTC programs on campus due to political differences between what the universities purported to stand for and the mission of the American military and, by extension, the ROTC programs funneling into it. However, Oklahoma effectively maintained and expanded its military training infrastructure by nurturing and operationalizing pro-American sentiments beginning during the First World War and successfully restricting opposing perspectives. While having consistently high numbers of participants, Oklahoma only has eight ROTC programs compared to neighboring Texas with 64, Arkansas with 16, and Louisiana with 15.[248]

Oklahoma underwent drastic changes during World War I to support the military and the national strategy of total war. The people of Oklahoma, not associated with the military, stayed to handle running the state while supporting the military with bodies, money, and industrial

[248] "ROTC Schools Search." goarmy.com. Accessed November 29, 2023. https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/find-your-path/army-officers/rotc/find-schools.html. The number of ROTC programs correlates to population of the state. Oklahoma is 1/8 the size of Texas, a little larger than Arkansas, and a little smaller than Louisiana.

goods. The creation of the Oklahoma State Council of Defense was not unique to Oklahoma, but the lengths Oklahoma's councils went to galvanize the populace, maintain state functionality, and suppress any noteworthy opposition. Even though after the war's end, Oklahoma dissolved the Councils of Defense, and the legislature resumed its standard functioning, the exceptionally stringent and oppressive enforcement of the various loyalty and espionage acts may have laid the foundations for acute nationalism that prevailed in the state.

All Oklahomans played a part in the state's participation in the war, both directly and indirectly. Native American and African American communities both sent hundreds to thousands of soldiers, sailors, marines, and aviators to Europe to play their part. Unfortunately, most of the media attention, for both positive and negative stories, went to Native American and Anglo-American mixed units. At the same time, Oklahoma's Black service members melded into obscurity in the labor battalions. Most media coverage of black servicemembers was usually associated with the small number of black units used for fighting, such as New York's Harlem Hellfighters. After the war's conclusion, racial tensions remained high despite every ethnic group's demonstration of national loyalty and pride through their wartime participation.

The war resulted in no change for the Black citizens of Oklahoma. Despite the efforts of the brave men who fought for a better future and the women on the home front participating in Red Cross organizations, the Blacks citizens of Oklahoma did not receive a fair deal. While some black communities in Northern, such as New York, received praise for their service and benefited from the vocational training from the Army, the Black communities in the Jim Crow South continued like before the war. Racial tensions in Oklahoma only increased in the post-war years as the Black communities galvanized themselves to become more militant in fighting for their rights as Americans. In the last analysis, the World War I experience in Oklahoma did more

to build the military identity of the state than it did to create a more progressive landscape of race relations.

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