

ABSTRACT

MILLS, JOHN CAMERON. College Men Go to War: The American University Union In Europe during World War I. (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Booker.)

Originally formed to provide a club for American college men serving overseas during World War I, and the American University Union in Europe earned nationwide and international renown while hostilities continued. Yet, despite strong support from 140 highly respected universities during the conflict, the Union struggled to find post war footing and began a slide into irrelevance which ended with quiet dissolution in 1947.

In this thesis, I explore possible reasons for the Union's descent, drawing from the letters of Yale's George Nettleton and University of Chicago's Harry Judson along with the publications of the organization itself. Broadly I believe the club had structural issues from its initial founding, such as personnel and money, but also was caught in the university and societal changes in the United States during this period, highlighted by the blurring of class lines and the massive intrusion of government into all corners of the nation.

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College Men Go to War: The American University Union
In Europe during World War I

by
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DEDICATION

To my parents John and Joanna Mills.

BIOGRAPHY

J. Cameron Mills is a native of North Carolina born in Winston-Salem and raised in Raleigh. He attended Needham Broughton High School and went on to Appalachian State University in Boone where he received his undergraduate degree in Political Science, with minors in History, and Philosophy and Religion.

His working life includes several years in the wine business at the wholesale and retail level, but most of his career has been in the military. He began in the United States Navy working on A-6 Intruders stationed at Whidbey Island Washington. While in the Navy he traveled overseas for the first time aboard the *USS Coral Sea* on a world cruise. After several years out of the service he joined the North Carolina Army National Guard full time in Raleigh and eventually deployed overseas three times: As a broadcast NCO to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brigade Psyop NCO in Iraq with the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, and Battle NCO with the Multi-National Force on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. Selected awards include: Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal (4 Awards), NC National Guard Achievement Medal, Career Counselor Badge, Presidential Unit Citation and Naval Unit Commendation.

Following his tour in Egypt he retired as a Sergeant First Class with 28 years of service in January of 2014. After resettling in Raleigh, he met and married his wife Heather and now has two wonderful step children, Chandler and Jack. His parents John and Joanna Mills reside in Wake Forest NC.

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"We are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is."

Mark Vonnegut quoted by his father Kurt

My name is on the title page and diploma but in reality hundreds of names should be listed. .

During my oral defense I told my committee that rather than being nervous I was flattered to have my work read, judged and commented on by three historians I admire. Ross Bassett, who looked me in the eye and told me in that kindly but firm way as I rambled on about multiple thesis ideas, "Cam, the AUUE is what you need to focus on." Brent Sirota, the best quote machine of any professor I've had the pleasure to learn with, "History is chess without rules; the moves of the pieces change before each turn." Most especially I am grateful to my chair Matthew Booker, whose good humor kept me sane and on track when I became lost, or overwhelmed. Thank you gentlemen.

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My father John Mills who first piqued my interest in history by replaying those “Victory at Sea” albums over and over, then regaling us with stories of our family history. My mother Joanna whose faith in me, and good humor has always been my touchstone in good times and bad.

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Introduction

Less than a year after the end of World War I and First Lieutenant Harry Bullis was not happy. A 1917 graduate of the University of Wisconsin and recent combat veteran, he wrote a scathing article at the request of the editors of *The Wisconsin Alumni Magazine* on the American University Union in Europe, or AUUE. Little known today the AUUE, an academic organization founded before America's entry into World War I, lasted only until the 1940's. At its height however articles appeared in the New York Times about a minor personnel change at the leadership of one of the Union's overseas offices.¹ Bullis while appreciative of the work and support the Union provided during the war, held only contempt for contemplated changes from a leave club for college men in Europe to a facilitator of college student exchanges between the US and Europe. He felt this initiative, pushed by a small cadre of elite universities with little input from larger state universities, headed the Union in the wrong direction. Harry Bullis believed his alma mater of Wisconsin "as representing one of the largest and sanest universities in the country, should certainly have a part in saying what should be done."²

The American University Union in Europe situated itself among the organizations and initiatives that encouraged educational advancement for those serving in uniform overseas during the Great War. Though organized on a smaller scale due to the demographic of troops it served, the renown of the AUUE, the respect afforded university leaders and the impressive credentials of the initial

¹ "Van Dyke to Quit University Union" *New York Times*, 29 July 1923, E1.

² Harry Bullis, "The Future of the American University Union" *Wisconsin Alumni Magazine*, 20 (1919) 148.

members of the group made it a force to be reckoned with both in the European Theater and in the papers back in the United States during World War I.

With these credentials why has the Union not been more prominent in the historiographic record? Founded as a “club” for rest and relaxation for American college men on leave in Europe, from the beginning leaders of the AUUE saw their organization as leading the way in university student exchanges following the war. They also foresaw the organization forging international and global alliances between universities and students.

Reflected at the societal and university level, a changing America affected the Union before and during World War I and buffeted the aspirations of Union leaders to forge a truly united postwar path for the AUUE. The leaders failed to take into account the vast upheaval as the United State headed into the modern age in the first truly modern war, but also failed to realize the changes that came to the college campus environment and the students themselves. The changing place in society of colleges, universities and their students caught the Union by surprise and the organization reacted too slowly for it to stay comfortably at its lofty level following the war. For the United States, World War I and its aftermath saw a large scale societal upheaval and “in many ways...made government a recognizable daily presence in the lives of Americans.”³

At a practical and organizational level I also argue that in some ways, everything went so well initially with the AUUE that the post war scramble for resources and relevancy surprised the leadership. There appeared to be three

³ Vincent Tompkins ed, *American Decades: 1910-1919* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), ix.

broad reasons for the slow slide into obscurity of the Union following the Armistice. Decentralization, bad timing and the wrong personnel with incorrect skill sets at the wrong time all played important roles in the process.

Initially founded from “bureaus” of individual colleges the structure never lent itself to unity. A definite hierarchy existed amongst member schools which reemerged as soon as the war emergency ended. Schools outside the East Coast elite universities suddenly felt left behind, as voiced by Lieutenant Bullis of Wisconsin.

Second, timing as the Union’s postwar goal to encourage international student exchanges following the war ran into political and economic realities. Even as the Union struggled to find the support for a new post war mission to Americanize academic knowledge, the larger US society turned inward in the 1920s. The sudden end of the war also jolted plans for the continued relevance of the Union as the Armistice in November of 1918 leading to the Treaty of Versailles took all parties by surprise including the United States, the AUUE staff and member schools. Seen and run as a club during the war, dues paying schools and philanthropists stopped contributing financially as soon as the hostilities ended which eventually led to operating issues. Simply put, Union leaders failed to make a compelling case for the organization’s stated goal of a change in direction and continued existence as a primary source of international student exchanges in the post war period.

Lastly, a clash of personalities, particularly after the Armistice in November of 1918, tore apart the Union as it passed into the post war era. The organization continued to exist, but the united front of college men working together quickly

dissolved. Director George Nettleton of Yale felt that later staff members made his job not only more difficult, but at times actively worked at cross purposes to the AUUE objectives. Nettleton, the primary administrative driving force on the ground in Europe during and immediately after the war, juggled a variety of interests reflected in both his staff and organization. He relied on the staff to perform as needed for the whole while he placated universities and their alumni who expected more individualized attention. This led to unmet expectations on his part, but also resulted in the steady turnover of staff members following the war, men who invested less emotionally than those who started and helped guide the AUUE through the war.

In order to tell the story of the founding, rapid rise and slow fall of the American University Union in Europe, and its place in a changing society I have utilized three sets of primary documents. First the AUUE's documents published for their supporting universities and potential donors told the public story of the Union, similar to a corporate report for investors and stockholders. One must read between the lines in order to get some sense of the organization and the attempt to justify both the dues and donations flowing in to the organization, and the expenditures overseas that supported the Doughboys. These documents, including annual reports and various pamphlets, provided a story line full of inconsistencies. They portrayed an organization that began life with success but ended up ill-equipped for the Armistice and aftermath of the war. The Union's attempt at relevancy in a changing society and peacetime reflected a tension between the old guard college alumni, and the increasing influence and attendance of public and land grant

university graduates. This more activist role for the government in academic circles along with the increased presence and influence of public universities alumni led to fault lines that the wartime emergency initially covered up but became clearer as the Armistice took effect and financial resources dried up.

Fortunately two other sets of documents pulled back the curtain on the organization's founding. Archival documents gave a personal view through the eyes of two influential AUUE figures, Professor George Nettleton of Yale and the University of Chicago's President Harry Judson. Nettleton served as the overseas director for the Union in Paris and his correspondence; particularly with his wife Mary, revealed both the joys and frustrations of setting up and running the organization during the war and in the aftermath of the Armistice in November of 1918. Professor Nettleton's voluminous contacts before and during the war became key in the early success of the Union. His letters, both personal and professional helped trace both the pre-war idealism and the beginnings of post-war cynicism in American academia and society.

Focused on the home front, the letters of Chicago's Harry Judson showed the challenges of coordinating the actions of colleges and universities with a wide variety of interests, as well as the logistical and communication difficulties of raising money to keep the Union financially viable. President Judson later became head of the AUUE in 1921 as the Union struggled not only to find relevance, but to raise money to continue its mission. Chronicled in his letters to other university presidents, donors and Professor Nettleton, Judson's frustration as a supporter during the war and attempts to put the organization on a solid financial footing following the war

help tell the stateside portion of the AUUE's founding pains along with some of the tensions and background on why the organization failed to gain traction after the Armistice.

The papers of these two men illustrated both the reach of the Union and the limits of support for the organization, particularly when the war emergency ended. While initially started as a club the AUUE's leaders had larger goals in mind. The journey through the war and afterward showcased the evolution and struggles of an organization searching for the resources for much loftier goals in the post-war years. A disjointed hierarchy, unclear chain of command and the pressure of changes in world and American society and culture hampered that goal. Though meeting those goals eventually proved to be elusive as an organization, others absorbed many of their tenets and joined in the push to internationalize higher education following the war.

In order to tell the story of the American University Union this thesis divides into three chapters. "The Great War and the American University" covers the cultural, governmental and societal changes in both America at large and more specifically colleges and their students and alumni. Culminating in the US entry on the side of the Allies, the government took hold of production and began an intrusion into daily American life across the country in ways unprecedented in the preceding 150 years. America's lead role and participation in the Industrial Revolution and the cultural and economic changes needed to support a modern society tested the country in unexpected ways but the conflict also led to a hyper-patriotic atmosphere in which propaganda and coercion played roles in the supplying and fighting of that

war. A large part of this chapter focuses on the cultural change and the impact these changes had on colleges and universities. From the first arrival of colonists to North America, the college model leaned more practical than the schools in Great Britain. As the country developed the collegiate landscape changed culturally but also changed in the profile of students as land grant schools. These universities, supported by federal, state and local governments began graduating alumni into society as a whole, oftentimes clashing with alumni from the old guard schools as evinced by Lieutenant Bullis of Wisconsin in his complaints against the leaders of the AUUE.

One important note on the focus of this thesis, I decided to leave out the contributions of college educated African-Americans and women, because the AUUE refused them membership during the war. When any source document mentioned the American University Union clientele, the historically black and women's colleges were simply not in the equation. Neither the AUUE, nor its membership accepted these groups though both contributed in large amounts and in critical jobs in the fight in Europe. I mention this because if the text reads "college graduates" or "college students" the reader may safely assume the focus is "white college men" instead of women and African-Americans. I have left their story to others who have more expertise in the field.

The second chapter begins following the Union from the initial efforts of individual universities to provide support for their students and alumni serving overseas to the unification of those efforts under one umbrella organization, the AUUE. The Union grew relatively smoothly, as schools saw the value and utility of

combining together to provide a location where college men could congregate and unwind when in transit or on leave through Paris, London and eventually Italy. The burst of patriotic fervor and willingness to support the wartime mission enabled the organization to grow, expand and provide amenities to the military and civilians with collegiate backgrounds who worked and fought in the warzone. However, even as the leadership and staff enjoyed the compliments and renown for the fine support they offered, signs appeared that an efficiently running an organization of this type within the rather loose confederation framework of colleges and universities stretched the limits of even the most organized of staffs.

The third chapter chronicles and analyzes the slow-motion devolution of the American University Union following the Armistice. The sudden end of the war surprised almost everyone including the director, whose ship returning from vacation at home had yet to reach Europe. The nearly universal reaction to the sudden end of hostilities led the AUUE on a sudden scramble for a recalibrated mission and the resources to support that mission. The AUUE attempted to retain relevance in the post war world. The pressure of reacting instead of implementing a planned transition to peacetime footing meant restructuring at the AUUE took place on the fly instead of in an organized fashion. When one adds in a wholesale transition from the initial experienced staff that built the Union, to new personnel with less of a vested interest along with the understandable staff attitude of wanting to fold tents and go home as soon as possible, director Nettleton held the organization together surprisingly well. However in the director's eyes, the backbiting and some key manpower mistakes not only sabotaged the post-war mission but actively dismantled

an in place organization poised to take over as the post war anchor processing and supporting student exchanges between American and European schools.

For me as a writer, the period after the war has become one of the most interesting sections of the AUUE's story primarily because of the personalities who climbed to other positions following the war. Whether their Union experience helped or hindered their post war ambitions is impossible to measure but fascinating. Of almost equal fascination is the post war university man that evolved out of the exigencies of the First World War.

The Union, in much reduced form and mostly irrelevant, finally ceased to exist following the World War II, but there are lessons to be drawn from this experiment in collegiality during the first truly industrial World War. AUUE leaders, representative of the leading universities of the nineteenth century, attempted to unite the younger, robust public schools in common cause but found difficulties beyond their own spheres of influence. Ultimately the Union lost steam and failed because the leadership attempted to keep much of their former influence under an umbrella of unity, while others pushed to lead.

Chapter 1

The Great War and the American University

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air-
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath-
It may be I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear...
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.⁴

In the 16th arrondissement of Paris, roughly 500 meters from the Arc de Triomphe lies the Place des Etats-Unis Park. This small, quiet garden and park honors the long relationship between the United States and France with an American style arrangement of flowers, benches and memorials based on Battery

⁴ Alan Seeger, "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" (1917) JFK Library. Accessed 21 October 2017, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/JFK-Fast-Facts/I-Have-a-Rendezvous-with-Death.aspx>. This poem was a favorite of President Kennedy and, according to the website he often had his wife read it to him.

Park in New York.⁵ Several are familiar, honoring George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette as well as a reproduction of New York Harbor's Statue of Liberty, but several need more explanation. Most striking among the lesser known statues stands a bronze of a soldier with his arm raised wearing uniform of the French Foreign Legion.

This work honors the twenty three Americans who died while serving in the Legion during World War I, and the sculptor created the figure based on Alan Seeger, Harvard '10 and a poet whose works became famous following publication in 1917. The posthumous publication following his 1916 death did not include "Rendezvous with Death" though it has become his most famous work. Fellow Harvard alum John F. Kennedy numbered it among his favorite poems. Interestingly the book of poetry flopped on initial publication and it took years for Seeger's work to become well known.

Literary critics panned Seeger's work for a variety of reasons. Certainly his youth had something to do with it, having not yet reached 30 years old, but also the type of wealthy college educated college man he represented appeared anachronistic and out of place in the years after WWI. Of his work, the critic F.F. Kelly wrote, "Their viewpoint is always that of the conventionally romantic and, fine in spirit and pleasing in form although the poems are, one looks in them in vain for any glimpse of forward shining light."⁶ Steeped in Romanticism and a "noblesse oblige" because of his wealthy background and Harvard education, Seeger fit the pattern of

⁵ "Place des Etats-Unis Park in Paris", EUtouring.com. Accessed 21 October 2017, http://www.eutouring.com/place_des_etats-unis_park_in_paris.html.

⁶ FF Kelly quoted from "Bookman." Accessed 21 October 2017, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/alan-seeger>.

the aristocratic American soldier who served his country and the world. He followed in the footsteps of Lawrence Chamberlain of Bowdoin College at the Battle of Gettysburg and Theodore Roosevelt of Harvard and Columbia up San Juan Hill.⁷ Despite his advantages, Seeger represented an older, almost quaint type of college man who while not gone from the cultural and collegiate landscape, certainly were becoming outnumbered among his peers with the growing numbers of graduates from less traditional, more modern colleges and universities.

The story of the American University Union in Europe is important in adding to the story of the World War I experience because it reflected the tensions and changes in both American society, on college campuses and between colleges and universities. American college men changed and continued to change in the years before hostilities broke out in Europe. More importantly the American style of higher education developed a unique style nominally based on European examples, but forged their own path from the very beginning of the colonial period.⁸

Aboard the ship sailing to North America the leaders of the new Massachusetts Bay Colony already had higher education on their minds as a part of their planned “city upon a hill.”⁹ Once landing they proceeded to add a school in only the colony’s eighth year of existence using public monies from the “general court of Massachusetts.”¹⁰

⁷ Roosevelt graduated from neither school, but that did not seem to hurt his burgeoning political career.

⁸ By “colonial” I mean “English/British.”

⁹ Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 103.

¹⁰ Ibid, 104.

The irony that the founding of what would eventually become Harvard University came from tax monies reflected the changes that not only took place upon establishment of settlements in a new land, but the flexibility that higher education showed in the American model. According to historian John Thelin in *A History of American Higher Education*, the colonials nominally patterned their developing academic life during the 17th and 18th century on that of Oxford and Cambridge and “Anglophilia is a recurring theme,” and the “attraction of the early American colleges (was) in part due to their historic association with England.”¹¹ This made sense since most of the college educated Puritans attended school at Cambridge, and initially that became the pattern of instruction with the added courses to enable the proper training of clergy.¹²

However in fact, the Oxford and Cambridge model of an “academic oasis” never fit particularly well with the more practical expectations of the colonists whose “colleges fused instruction and certification.”¹³ Thelin wrote, in a play on the stereotype, this style fit more comfortably with the Scottish style of higher education though the colonials would not admit it. As other schools joined Harvard in educating the children of colonists, the focus on the ministry remained but the colleges added medical and legal tracks which eventually awarded advanced

¹¹ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) 7.

¹² Charles I. Abramson et al, "History and Mission," in *The Modern Land-Grant University*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014), 4.

¹³ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* 8.

degrees “based upon a period of training rather than an extended period of scholarship.”¹⁴

This practicality also appeared after Independence as the new country began to grow rapidly in size and population which revealed issues that the traditional classical and professional tracks could not supply. The largest issues became “the challenges of expanded agriculture and the growth of the Industrial Revolution.”¹⁵ In order to deal with these, the US colleges changed or grew to accommodate new and different courses of study which offered the needed degrees in agriculture and engineering. High costs prevented advanced schooling, and “it was clear that there needed to be more institutions accessible to the growing population to ensure people’s talents were developed.”¹⁶

The effort to grapple with these issues began a search to create situations to ensure those interested in pursuing these fields had the opportunity. Few private schools invested in the facilities needed for agriculture or engineering instruction, nor were their tuition costs affordable for most of the population. As early as the administration of George Washington, Samuel L. Mitchell floated the idea of state agricultural colleges, a proposal deemed important enough to appear in Washington’s address to Congress during his second term. Paired with the more successful recommendation to establish a national military school, the agricultural school idea languished until just prior to the Civil War.¹⁷

¹⁴ Abramson et al, "History and Mission," in *The Modern Land-Grant University*, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Even the United States Military at West Point was not established until the Jefferson administration in 1802.

The term “land grant college” has little to do with the fact that most of the schools named as such leaned heavily agricultural when founded. The term referred to a method of funding which first appeared in a failed bill introduced by Republican Senator Morrill of Vermont in 1857. However, as Thelin wrote, “some evidence suggests that in the United States-apart from the seceding states-the Civil War provided a political opportunity to push through legislation that had been stalled.”¹⁸ By the time of the passage of the first Morrill Act in 1862, the idea the federal government would donate land for states to use to build schools also included the requirement “the new universities would provide training in military tactics,” apparently inspired by the ongoing American Civil War. This act had local precedence but not on a national scale. Encouraged by the western states, it provided a mechanism to build the infrastructure needed to educate farmers and engineers at a significantly lower cost. The later 1890 Morrill Bill, which provided separate institutions for those states with race based admissions policies used the less unique finance method of an infusion of federal government cash, but those institutions still refer to themselves as “land grant” schools since the federal government provided the resources to start them.

Thelin noted that though stereotypically called “democracy’s colleges” land grant institutions took decidedly different paths with different priorities depending on the state and locale due to the wide latitude afforded by the Morrill Act. Some became associated with existing schools, such as Blacksburg Seminary which morphed into Virginia Polytechnic Institute or even transferred the money to support

¹⁸ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 75.

local private schools such as Yale University in Connecticut or Cornell University in New York. Other states such as Oregon stood up completely new colleges with the money while others with already existing publicly funded schools, such as the University of Georgia and University of North Carolina used the largess to create additional colleges such as the Georgia Institute of Technology and North Carolina State University.

Much of course had to do with the culture and priorities of each state but the state-driven method of financing also had the secondary effect of a division of haves and have nots across the country. In fact financing schools provided an unintended higher education boon to fix a larger issue, “the central question was how to deal with vast expanses of land in the west and to what end – not whether one should build state colleges or even promote advanced educational programs.”¹⁹

In order to generate the money the national government gave each state western acreage to sell as they saw fit with the profits earmarked for education. This helped solve an extended debate as to whether those “unsettled lands should be opened to commercial development or subjected to orderly apportionment by the government to promote settlement while simultaneously raising revenues.”²⁰ Allowing each state to individually market and sell their allotment and using the proceeds to fund education enabled a compromise at the national level. However the revenue generated varied widely depending on how vigorously each state pursued generation of the maximum return. Some such as New York profited immensely while others like Rhode Island had a much lower dollar amount returned.

¹⁹ Ibid, 78.

²⁰ Ibid.

As noted in most recent histories on the land grant colleges, while the Morrill Acts helped to grow and spread more state supported schools it actually reflected an impulse many state and local governments had already acted upon rather than initiating the process. Perceived by most Americans as the reachable entry point into the middle class for small town America. the land grant universities became enormously popular for those who lived in rural areas. However at even lower government levels, other localities looked to bring practical education to the masses in urban environments.

The result enabled the founding of municipal schools to provide technical degrees less focused on agriculture and more focused on engineering. While support for these municipal schools came not from federal monies, often they had the financial backing of local governments and philanthropists who saw the advantages of an educated populace at all levels of the social strata. These urban universities, in Toledo, Boston and Buffalo for example, used practical approaches to reduce the cost of education for its students. For example most schools provided little in the way of living quarters on campus. This allowed for local students to commute to classes from their homes, instead of trying to find and pay for their own accommodations in a different locale. Some of the most innovative ideas for higher education developed in these municipal schools, once again feeding the American instinct for practicality.²¹

The wider range of entry points developed for American college men in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century greatly increased the

²¹ Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History*, 153-154.

diversity of college men as World War I began in Europe.²² Many of the old guard graduates felt these schools contributed little to the intellectual or social advancement of American society and displayed an attitude similar to Lyman Bagg of Yale who wrote it would “be a blessing if all but a half dozen or so of the universities founded after 1800 had been ‘blotted out of existence, or turned into preparatory schools for the other ones.’”²³

This potential infighting between college men of different schools took a hiatus as war broke out in Europe and, though technically a neutral in the conflict, American citizens and vessels waded into dangerous territory on the seas while supplying supplies of all types to the warring powers. A difficult tightrope for the nation to walk but the tacit and material support for the Allies over the Central Powers led many to the inescapable conclusion that war appeared inevitable and while preparations for that eventuality began, many American citizens, such as Alan Seeger traveled overseas and went into the conflict well before US entry.

On the second of April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against the German Empire. A long line of grievances and provocations by Germany and the Central powers against the United States led Wilson to this moment but without a specific flashpoint such as the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo which started World War I in Europe in 1914. Wilson rarely acted in haste and the request to join the Allies resulted from a careful reading of the American public, and a surprisingly cynical manipulation of opinion. Wilson had the ideals of the Princeton professor and president he had been, but also

²² As mentioned in the Introduction, this diversity rarely included racial nor gender diversity.

²³ Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History*, 147.

the instincts of a politician who won campaigns for both governor of New Jersey and two as president. In broad strokes most of the American complaints against Germany and the Central Powers regarded free transit of the seas and the safe transit of neutral shipping from which the United States profited enormously, but “keeping the world safe for capitalism” was not a slogan that would inspire the US public to support the war.

In the period between the 1914 outbreak of war in Europe and Wilson’s appearance before Congress the Germans attempted to avoid open provocation even though the Allies largely depended on these nominally neutral ships to keep their troops supplied and armed. Incidents such as the deaths of 128 Americans aboard the passenger liner Lusitania in 1915 pushed American opinion toward entry, but Wilson’s combination of caution and pressure forced the Germans to promise to refrain from attacking passenger vessels in the future.²⁴ This even though the German protestation the ship carried tons of war munitions later proved true which made it more warship than passenger vessel. Nevertheless this mollified public opinion enough to allow Wilson to campaign and win his 1916 reelection bid by trumpeting the slogan “He kept us out of war.”²⁵

Congress agreed to Wilson’s request and passed the declaration of war four days later, and two months after America’s 1st Division consisting of 28,000 men disembarked in France. Though combat operations delayed until the spring of 1918,

²⁴David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 32.

²⁵Robert H. Zieger, *America’s Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 42-44.

over two million American men and women eventually served overseas in World War I.²⁶

The US was only officially at war for a year and a half and American troops saw combat for less than ten months. Yet most of the historiography of the era focused on military preparation and combat, which made up only a small part of the war effort. The war itself raged across the globe for more than three years before Americans arrived. Coming in toward the end of the conflict skewed the American leaders and veterans view and they overstated the US role in defeating the Axis Powers, yet European leaders while they noted and appreciated the influx of soldiers and material downplayed that impact.²⁷

The United States needed a massive industrial and logistical effort, along with a wrenching change from a rural and agricultural to an urban and industrial society in order to fight the war. The lead up to and occupation after the war extended chronologically several times longer than the short period of US combat operations. This huge logistical undertaking effected how American's perceived themselves, their society and even their government. Americans, like it or not, both overseas and at home, changed in ways their ancestors would scarcely recognize.²⁸

Following the Armistice in November of 1918, the focus became almost exclusively on memorializing and glorifying the American "Doughboy." Though combat operations tended to soak up most attention in the popular imagination,

²⁶, Ibid, xviii.

²⁷ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 193.

²⁸ Christopher Capazzola, *Uncle Sam Wants YOU: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.)

several works in more recent historiography made the case that the societal changes needed to bring American power to bear in Europe during the Great War had much more of an impact on societal mores and life in the United States than the actual combat.²⁹

In popular memory one could make the case that World War I has become the 20th century's true forgotten war. There is not a simple answer to this, but a clue lies in Samuel Eliot Morrison's famous adage quoted in Thomas Littlewood's *Soldiers Back Home*, "World War I was the most popular war in history while it lasted and the most hated when it was over."³⁰ Much of this antipathy had to do with timing, the late entry, the short period of combat and the surprisingly sudden end to hostilities. During the time period from the end of World War II until the 1980s, very few works of note were written specifically on the Great War with the exception of Frederick Paxson's massive three-volume work, *American Democracy and the World War*, even though the war's impact had changed the United States profoundly.³¹

Why would subsequent conflicts take center stage and place Great War history on the back burner? More chronologically immediate conflicts focused historians and the public on other conflicts as well as the perception that the "War to End All Wars" misnamed World War I. However, though one could argue the result of combat changed little, settled nothing and merely set the stage for further combat

²⁹ Kennedy, *Over Here*, viii.

³⁰ Thomas B. Littlewood, *Soldiers Back Home: The American Legion in Illinois, 1919-1939* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), xiii.

³¹ Frederick L. Paxson, *American Democracy and the World War* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. 3 Volumes, 1936-48.)

twenty years later, one could also argue that the United States as a society changed immeasurably at home and on the world stage.³² The most important work took place at home and in the daily lives of Americans.

The most revered and cited work in this social and cultural historiography is David Kennedy's *Over Here* published in 1980, which changed the way historians wrote about the war. The book helped shift from an emphasis on military and political history to cultural history.³³ Though mostly focused on the home front, it does discuss what pushed America into war, how the country changed during the war and how the rest of the world's nations reacted to the new global reach of the United States. Groundbreaking when originally released, other authors have since overtaken *Over Here* by expanding the historical view on societal change during this period by narrowing their scope.

Chris Cappazola's 2008 *Uncle Sam Wants You* painted a darker picture of American society during the war and brought to light what he called "coercive volunteerism" in which officials encouraged and tacitly endorsed vigilantism by civilian organizations to help support the war.³⁴ This offshoot of the Progressive Era's faith in the people and their innate ability to work in ways beneficial to the nation, spawned violent extra-legal violence and led to a "postwar fear of the mob and the crowd."³⁵ This extra-government enforcement enabled local control exercised by draft boards who had broad powers on those drafted even leaving aside African Americans for example when they felt it necessary.

³² Kennedy, *Over Here*, viii.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cappazola, *Uncle Sam*, 83.

³⁵ Ibid, 16.

Cappazola also focused on the rise of civil rights and civil libertarianism during the war to combat these overreaches of civilian organizations. He argued that the rise of the centralized state took place in large part to protect these citizens from the vigilante-like activities of the voluntary associations which had so dominated American society and which were admiringly written of by Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1835 work *Democracy in America*, "Thus the most democratic country on earth is found to be, above all, the one where men in our day have most perfected the art of pursuing the object of their common desires in common and have applied this new science to the most objects"³⁶

Tocqueville noted that "as soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have conceived a sentiment or an idea that they want to produce in the world, they seek each other out; and when they have found each other, they unite. From then on, they are no longer isolated men, but a power one sees from afar, whose actions serve as an example; a power that speaks, and to which one listens."³⁷ However the industrialized society required for the United States to compete and fight in a world war, found associations initially useful but eventually began to fear the vigilantism inherent in them when used to help mobilize. In order to combat overreach, the emphasis shifted to the "primacy of political obligations to the federal government and it placed law and legal process more firmly at the center of understandings of citizenship."³⁸

³⁶Alexis de Tocqueville, "An excerpt from *Democracy in America*," University of Chicago Press. Accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/805328.html>.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Cappazolla, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 53.

This forced the government to focus on individual citizens civil rights, and led to the downfall in the power of associations which de Tocqueville warned against because, “the morality and intelligence of a democratic people would risk no fewer dangers than its business and its industry if the government came to take the place of associations everywhere.”³⁹ This change, while necessary for the modern world, led to the fading of “the culture of obligation, grounded in voluntary associations...over the course of the 20th century (along with) the assumptions of responsible speech that accompanied it.”⁴⁰ An integral part of the American Democratic experiment passed away as another casualty of World War I.

The most eye opening work for me in this group Jennifer Keene’s 2003 *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, revealed the massive upheaval in American society that precipitated a sea change in not only how Americans fight wars, but also how citizens saw their obligation in a national and global context.⁴¹ Keene asked generally “How did World War I change America,” but she also asked more specifically, “how did the Doughboys remake the economic and social landscape?”⁴²

“Doughboys remake” are the key words in the title and work here. Though high political and military leaders made appearances in her story, they generally commented on or reacted to the actions and thoughts of the common soldier. However these American soldiers, though changed by their war experience, served

³⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

⁴⁰ Cappazolla, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 171.

⁴¹ Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2003.)

⁴² Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, x.

without the passivity the military expected. They became active participants in their service and the parameters and expectations of that service. The Army had a huge task but expected to train and indoctrinate the civilians to military life and eventually reap political power from their support. These citizen-soldiers exhibited little of the malleability military leaders had expected and since draftees made up more than 70% of the troops they, more often than not, changed the way the military dealt with them. In other words, they not only changed the social landscape during and after the war but generally had their way with the Army. .⁴³

Colleges, their students and graduates, occupied an interesting spot in the national consciousness leading up to the beginning of the war. A quick perusal of Americans who volunteered to fight overseas for foreign governments reveal a high proportion of well to do and college graduates filling spots in Allied Armies, everything from the British, to Canadian to the French Foreign Legion. Positions varied from ambulance drivers to pilots to infantry as represented by Alan Seeger. The pre-American entry press lauded these volunteers as heroes and wrote about them in glowing terms especially as sentiment began to grow against Germany and the Central Powers.

Wartime opportunities “did provide a dramatic opportunity for an extension of the ‘college hero role’ best epitomized by “gentleman athlete” Hobey Baker⁴⁴. A star of Princeton’s football team and 1914 graduate, Baker joined the famed Lafayette Escadrille and fought throughout the war for France and later joined the American Army Flying Corps when the US joined the Allied effort. His sporting reputation as a

⁴³ Ibid. 133.

⁴⁴ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 201.

gentleman and his willingness to fight made him into such a hero that his Princeton classmate F. Scott Fitzgerald used him as inspiration for his fictional college heroes.⁴⁵

Why would American college men volunteer in such high numbers before the war? It appears several factors, the first of which was the previously mentioned extension of the college hero role. A young single man, college graduate or not, could volunteer for service without the worry of losing a job or being kicked out of school. The typical college man also tended to come from relatively or very well-to-do families that had the ability to fund a recruiting trip to Canada or across the Atlantic to the offices of the British Army or French Foreign Legion. In short these young men volunteered for pre-war service because they had the time and the resources to do so.

While those serving added to the patriotic luster of colleges and universities the brewing conflict of academic freedom caused a perception that campuses had reactionary academics not at all in line with the average citizen or American values. Since the late 19th and early 20th century, college boards, presidents and professors engaged in public battles on the subject of the obligations of academic free speech. The issue of scholars and professors who expressed unpopular opinions impacted their careers just as they pushed for academic tenure and job security. This academic ideal ran into the goals of college administrators whose job to keep these institutions afloat financially became more difficult when unpopular ideas or infighting became public. "Therein lay the crux of the matter. For faculty

⁴⁵ Ibid, 203-204.

defenders of academic freedom, issues of high principal were at stake...(for others)...questions of academic freedom were about public relations, about the consequences of having one of a school's members voicing sentiment calculated to arouse the ire of those upon whom the university...depended on for support."⁴⁶ The professors believed in high principles, the administration believed in the practicality of keeping the doors open.

This conflict rolled into the debate in the years before entry about whether the US should become part of the conflict. The war deeply divided Americans and college campuses were no exception. The opinions ranged from a position of "militant pacifism" to "urging that America take up Germany's cause in the war."⁴⁷ Academics continued to express pacifist opinions even following Wilson's request for a declaration of war. This led to problems because "what during calmer times might have been overlooked as merely objectionable was now regarded as outright sedition or treason."⁴⁸

Though most schools, professors and administrators stayed out of the news when it came to institution infighting about the cause and morality of the war, it appeared many of these felt the pressure of Chris Cappazola's "coercive voluntarism" when they attempted thoughtful discourse on the war. The massive emptying of classrooms via enlistments and the draft reflected uncoerced enthusiasm, but there also appears a bit of exaggerated college patriotism. The American University Union and its goal of supporting the tens of thousands of

⁴⁶ Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History*, 196.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 198.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

overseas college men reflected that, while the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) mirrored that sentiment on the homefront.

The SATC resulted from a need, training officers, a usable location, underused college classrooms, a receptive ear, former college president Woodrow Wilson, and a great sales job by the universities. Prior to World War I, the expectation that college educated officers would lead the American Army simply did not exist. However, colleges and universities changed that perception by “persuading national leaders and the public that a comprehensive war commitment required college trained leaders.”⁴⁹ With full support from a president who understood the need to use and fill classrooms, “the SATC quickly established on campus training programs for cadets and officers funded by the federal government which also provided generous per capita compensation to the cooperating colleges.”⁵⁰ The SATC “smoothly connected to the larger national war effort” which more importantly “transformed how the American public viewed the campus to the national war effort and how the campus positioned itself.”⁵¹ This had the double effect of not only filling empty classrooms but helped combat the image of the college as centers of seditious thoughts.

In order to qualify for the money the schools had to loosen admission standards in order to comply. By the time the program ended following the war, this program showed the remarkable result of participation of over 540 colleges and universities and “roughly 125,000 men inducted into the Students Army Training

⁴⁹ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 200.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Corps.”⁵² Though many of those men had been current students at those institutions, many cadets had not only never been on a campus, but more than likely had neither the money nor opportunity to do so. In another change to the normal way of things, opening up campuses opened up the eyes of less well to do citizens to the possibilities of higher education. The draft provided another way that the war brought different men in different social strata together.

The draft worked as a great leveler by allowing few exceptions precluding service except for extreme physical and mental abnormalities. No “college” exception existed which proved do controversial during later wars.⁵³ Soldiers came from all walks of life, all parts of the country and all education levels. However with college men spread throughout the American Expeditionary Force in all ranks and positions, other soldiers began to realize the benefits of education. Much of this came from an increased respect for educated men that the familiarity of the trenches brought. John Seerley, an American pilot with a background in law and business noted that the contempt that rural and working class citizens had for the university educated seems to have been reduced “and altered people’s view of college men.”⁵⁴ He wrote “War showed that college men were all right. They responded to a man when called. This fact has helped remove a heap of prejudice against them.”⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ David Card and Thomas Lemieux, "Going to College to Avoid the Draft: The Unintended Legacy of the Vietnam War," *The American Economic Review* 91, no. 2 (2001): 97-102. Accessed 12 June 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2677740>.

⁵⁴ Mark Meigs, “Crash Course Americanism: The AEF University 1919,” *History Today*, 44, 8 (August 1994), 41.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 42.

Several educational initiatives also helped reduce tensions between the working and educated classes particularly after the war which while mostly focused on keeping the troops busy, also appealed to “moral uplift.” The American University Union would be involved with some of these initiatives such as sending soldiers to classes at the Sorbonne in France, along with Oxford and Cambridge in England, along with helping to set up the AEF (American Expeditionary Force) University in Beaune for those already at the post-secondary level. Other programs at the divisional or regimental levels focused on completing high school diplomas or teaching technical skills for those who needed them. All of this attempted to counter the supposed evils of military life and exposure to more decadent countries that might influence soldiers.⁵⁶ Beyond formal education and as tourists the soldiers began a cultural education many had never previously imagined.

Since most white Americans were descended from European immigrants, and had obvious emotional ties to the Old World, but still had little real feel for politics or culture on the continent beyond newspaper and books in the United States. The war changed that. American soldiers not only experienced the horrors of combat, but most had a previously unheard of opportunity to explore the cities and towns and learn about European culture. Prior to World War I, only the very wealthy had the resources to travel overseas, but suddenly men who had never traveled much

⁵⁶ Alexander Barnes, *In a Strange Land: The American Occupation of Germany 1918-1923* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2011.)

beyond their family farms appeared prowling the streets of Paris both as tourists, and looking for what soldiers look for.⁵⁷

The Doughboys grew up and began to stand on a world stage. The American University Union in Europe perceived itself as part of the support network for men of a certain class far away from home. They ended up branching out far beyond that class which had unintended consequences.

⁵⁷ Mark Meigs, *Optimism at Armageddon: Voices of American Participants in the First World War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2003) 77-78. The irony, of course, is after the war with over a quarter of a million soldiers on occupation duty, they enjoyed the finest beer in the world in their local German hofbrauhaus, while their compatriots back home got used to Prohibition as the law of the land. The irony was not lost on the troops.

Chapter 2

High Water Mark: Founding of the Union to Armistice

According to its official publications the American University Union in Europe (AUUE) resulted from two associations originating overseas. The first group of college men met in Paris in June 1917 to form the “American Alumni Association in France.” The ten colleges represented held a decided East Coast bias, with the University of Michigan the sole representative outside that area. The Atlantic seaboard tilt was not intentional; it had more to do with the American Alumni Association joining with the existing Yale Bureau in Paris which the Yale trustees had authorized a month earlier.⁵⁸ Subsequent boards and officers would continue this Yale/East Coast bias though it loosened as the membership grew.

By July 1917 after consulting with “officials of the Red Cross, International Committee of the Young Men’s Christian Association, and the War Department,” a meeting in New York officially combined and established the AUUE.⁵⁹ This meeting included the University of Washington in Seattle, so diplomatic relations with the West Coast were finally established.

The strong Yale bias resulted primarily from the university’s early establishment of a “Bureau” in Paris after the American entry into the war, but well before American troops arrived in Europe. Though President Wilson had campaigned only a year earlier with the slogan “He kept us out of war,” many

⁵⁸ *The American University Union in Europe: 1917-1918*, 6-7. Accessed 2 March 2016, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3072317;view=1up;seq=1>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

American leaders, at home and abroad, seemed unsurprised to be involved in the war, and prepared accordingly.

Yale planned to send a representative to Paris as early as the summer of 1917 as announced in the 15 June 1917 *Yale Alumni Weekly* “it has been decided to establish...a Yale Bureau in Paris for the period of the war. Professor George Nettleton '96...will act as director of the Bureau for the coming year, being assisted by recent graduates.”⁶⁰ “As over one hundred Yale undergraduates (were)...already in France...it has seemed wise to the University authorities to be forehanded in establishing this bureau, which it is believed is the first of the kind arranged for by an American university.”⁶¹ This rather modest initial goal appears almost quaint as Professor Nettleton would end up overseas for much more than a year, and the “Yale Bureau” would eventually change and grow to an organization with a membership of over 140 colleges and Universities.⁶²

George Nettleton was an interesting, canny pick for Yale to lead its Bureau during the war. Not only was he a Yale man, but his voluminous contacts and travels to Europe with his wife Mary prior to American involvement enabled him to quickly and seamlessly begin work on what became the American University Union in a relatively short period of time.

George Henry Nettleton was a native of Boston, born in 1874, the son of attorney Edward Payson Nettleton and his wife Mary Ellen. He attended primary

⁶⁰ “Paris Yale Bureau Planned,” *Yale Alumni Weekly*, June 15 1917, p. 1039. Accessed 1 May 2017. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/imgsrv/image?id=uc1.c2533975;seq=1057;width=1190>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² *The American University Union in Europe: 1917-1918*, 25.

school in Boston, and then earned his B.A. (1896) and Ph.D. (1900) in English Language and Literature from Yale University where he was a Phi Beta Kappa. Following his Ph. D, Nettleton married Mary Clark Treat in 1902 and they soon became the proud parents of Edward Treat and Mary Treat Nettleton. Nettleton then rose through the ranks in the Yale English Department as assistant, then full professor by 1916.

The AUUE was officially chartered in New York City “on July 6, 1917, for the purpose of establishing the American University Union in Europe, adopting a constitution, and electing officers. The plan of organization...included a representative Board of Trustees in America, a small Executive Committee, in Paris, appointed by the Board, and an Advisory Council composed of representative American college and university men living in France.”⁶³ This already shows some of the decentralization that would plague the Union, but since the United States had recently become an ally of France and Great Britain, a spirit of cooperation seemed to gloss over any disagreements. The charter and purpose of the Union was threefold.

1. To provide at moderate cost a home with the privileges of a simple club for American college men and their friends passing through Paris or on furlough : the privileges to include an information bureau, writing and newspaper room, library, dining room, bedrooms, baths, social features, opportunities for physical recreation, entertainments, medical advice, etc.
2. To provide a headquarters for the various bureaus already established or to be established in France by representative American universities, colleges, and technical schools.
3. To cooperate with these bureaus when established, and in their absence to aid institutions, parents, or friends, in securing information about college men in

⁶³ Ibid, 8.

all forms of war service, reporting on casualties, visiting the sick and wounded, giving advice, serving as a means of communication with them, etc.⁶⁴

Appointed the director, Nettleton quickly organized his home life to enable his wife Mary to run the family and boarded a transatlantic cruise ship for the wartime trip to Paris on the August 3, 1917. The newly tasked leader of the Union in Europe had experience crossing the Atlantic. He and his wife had taken many trips to the continent for both research and to visit friends, though their pre-war voyages extended mostly to the British Isles rather than the continent.

Upon arrival in Paris, securing a location proved to be the single most time consuming and difficult part of setting up the AUUE and getting it running. The search began immediately. An 1898 graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Van Rensselaer Lansingh had set up shop in the “Tech Club” in Paris, which MIT rented. Nettleton moved into these temporary quarters as they searched for a larger hotel.⁶⁵ The Tech Club offered offices and lodging but only had room for an initially small staff. MIT sent Lansingh to Paris following word that the AUUE would support troops in Europe and he had a firm feel for the environment and conditions when it came to potential locations and prices for the AUUE.

Lansingh appeared to be one of these preternaturally efficient people who proved the saw, “If you want something done, give it to a busy person.” Prior to his Union posting, he served stateside as the assistant to the director of the Council on National Defense in Washington, DC as well as tasked to set up a Tech Bureau in

⁶⁴ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁵ George Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, Yale University (Box # 11, Folder # 139), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, letter dated 21 August 1917 from George Nettleton to Mary Nettleton. Unless otherwise cited, letter is from George to Mary Nettleton.

the nation's capital. Sending him to Paris to look after the interests of MIT, as well as assisting in the Union setup seemed a natural fit.⁶⁶ Nettleton would come to depend on his reliable, organized assistant who seemingly had no ego.

In letters home to his wife, George Nettleton outlined the failures and successes behind the Union's official record. The first hotel that met the Union's needs was the Hotel D'lana. Since they felt certain they would make it their quarters the pair moved their operations out of the Tech Club to the Hotel. The ability of the director and assistant director/business manager to quickly find a location with a large number of rooms, a nice restaurant and the willingness to cut them a deal for the entire place caused them to begin negotiations immediately. Sticking points appeared however and much of the concerns centered on heating.⁶⁷

The issues with coal and heating were three-fold. First, coal heat warmed most of the buildings in Europe. Second, the coal also heated the hot water heaters for showers and baths, which would be one of the first desires for any soldier coming from the wet, lice-ridden frontlines. Lastly, there existed the rationing and prices required for a country at war. Even though hotels had to make money, coal became strictly rationed and they had to pay prices that kept rising even as their biggest lodging customers, the military, had incomes that stayed relatively stagnant. The AUUE in order to at least break-even, had to not only find a way to get more coal, but make it profitable for the hotel.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ John H. Ruckman, ed, *Technology's War Record* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Alumni Association, 1920), 61 and 649.

61, 649.

⁶⁷ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 18 Sep 1917.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 1 October 1917.

This rationing and cost caused negotiations to drag out for over a month between the Hotel and the AUUE. Apparently the British owners were keen to make as much guaranteed profit as possible and decided that the Union had few options if they wanted to rent out an entire building. In letters to his wife, Nettleton is by turns hopeful, irritated and despairing as the negotiations continued to drag out. Ultimately when it appeared as if the YMCA would cover the cost of coal, the owners hardened their financial position because of the windfall that looked inevitable.⁶⁹

The Hotel D'iena's delaying ploy backfired on the owners however and the "long delay was providential" for the AUUE.⁷⁰ In a letter on the 1st of October 1917 Nettleton told Mary that after a month of negotiation "October starts most auspiciously...and the solution has been wholly unexpected."⁷¹ The YMCA had begun offering hotel accommodations and Nettleton decided that in order to serve their target audience they needed to look at a more central location than the D'iena could provide. This meant the opportunity to enlarge their search area, along with the Union profiting by piggy backing on lower prices offered to the YMCA. Ironically a potential rival actually ended up helping to drive down prices and the new Royal Palace Hotel "was superior to the D'lina in almost every way."⁷²

The AUUE had a vast upgrade in hotel location. A concern had been the D'lina required train travel which stopped running at 9PM along with the fear that these times could become even more restrictive as wintertime decreased the availability of fuel. The Royal Palace had no such issues since its location not only

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

resided in central Paris but adjoined both the Theatre Francais and the Louvre. Though smaller than their original target lodging, the newer and more comfortable Royal thrilled Nettleton and he wrote it had “as many bathrooms...as in the whole Hotel D’lena which is three times as big.”⁷³

The new hotel also included heat as part of the contract so the Union had fewer worries about trying to track down coal or finding a way to pay for it. All in all, the modernity and location was much better though the new hotel had fewer banquet rooms. In addition the lower guarantee of 190,000 francs per year versus 200,000 plus another 90,000 for coal also helped the Union’s in case they ran into a potential worst case scenario in which they had to make up any shortfalls in the lodging by the military men it served. The AUUE already approved the original 290,000 franc guarantee and Nettleton decided saving the organization 100,000 francs would also meet the approval of the trustees.⁷⁴ However in this same letter signs appeared of a division of resources.

He mentioned the allocation of space on each floor in which several colleges had suites which consisted of a salon to use as a reception room, and office along with a large bedroom for the director. While the AUUE was ostensibly an organization devoted to all American college men, no matter the school and no matter their rank, the infrastructure needs of “Bureaus” accommodated those soldiers first and gave the impression to the soldiers served by the Union that some schools were more equal than others. Throughout the war, if a school could afford

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid

to send over a representative and afford to pay for an office in the hotel accommodations became available to help their alumni and students. I

Initially the schools included “Yale, Harvard, Tech (MIT) and Princeton...and probably Michigan” wrote Nettleton to his wife.⁷⁵ This followed logically since the American Union rose initially from the Yale Bureau, but it also became apparent how a “Yale Man” might have a different reception at the Hotel than say a “Wisconsin Man” like LT Bullis. However the expense of these standalone bureaus appeared in a later letter when Nettleton noted that Professor Hibbert, who represented the University of Michigan, wondered about his school’s ability to take over one of the suites because of the expense.

Private schools worried less about budgetary restraints that affected the state schools, but there appeared no conclusive evidence whether this had more to do with cash availability or legal issues. Many of these schools may have joined the Union for the prestige of reflected glory from the older East Coast institutions but one can read between the lines that the less well off universities became a bit begrudging about it

After establishing a board and procuring headquarters in the Royal Palace Hotel in Paris, the new organization set about combining the different bureaus established by other colleges and universities under the AUUE umbrella. The new building held offices, party rooms and accommodations, along with a restaurant of some renown. Now that the Union had a home it could fulfill its purpose in addition to consolidating the various US college groups already in the city.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

What was the Union, beyond a place for college men to meet, relax and recreate? Many more officers' clubs existed in Paris and elsewhere to entertain the troops. One key difference however was that military rank appeared immaterial to the use of the AUUE. In fact director Nettleton comments in the first month in Paris that the Union had hosted "two Generals...down to Privates. There doesn't seem to be any difficulty in their mingling." ⁷⁶

One of the AUUE's competitors for military foot traffic, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) were established with a large presence in Paris. The Y also extended to the front lines with mobile canteens (locations that provided both a place for troops to relax and buy snacks and other sundries) and provided entertainers to the front lines and back to the rear. The over 26,000 paid YMCA employees and 35,000 volunteers held responsibility for not only the Soldier's morals as Christian Warriors, but their morale as well, and provided a place to stay, eat and congregate when they visited Paris while on leave or in transit on the way to the trenches.⁷⁷

The organization had the backing of the Commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John Pershing and with that support had their scope of responsibility greatly enlarged. This also allowed the Y to rake in millions of dollars in not only private donations but government money because of their success and organizational skills.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 30 Oct 1917.

⁷⁷ Captain Ralph Blanchard, "The History of the YMCA in World War I," Doughboy Center: The Story of the American Expeditionary Forces. Accessed 5 May 2017, <http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/ymca.htm>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Though the AUUE seemed to have enough money for operations during the war, they had to be more thrifty than the YMCA and could only look on in envy at the YMCA's operations. Nettleton and his staff however established a friendly working relationship with the YMCA and even had a promise from local officials to cover the cost of coal in Union headquarters, though later revoked by higher officials in the Y. It turned out the offer of assistance became unnecessary because of the hard work that the Union put into finding a solid headquarters that included the cost of coal.⁷⁹

One reason the YMCA eventually refused to finance the Union was exclusivity. The YMCA was tasked to serve all American military men, overseas and on the home front. That duty disregarded rank and social standing, though the YMCA refused to serve black soldiers. The AUUE, however, focused exclusively on white American College men, whether graduates or left in the middle of their studies.. In theory that meant rank became immaterial, though with college backgrounds it was not surprising that most of those who signed into the logs were officers in the various American military branches. Country of service also appeared unimportant. One visitor to the Union was French Legionnaire Howard Ellis of the University of Chicago, found medically unfit by the US Army, but later joined the artillery corps of the French Foreign Legion and gladly enjoyed the benefits at the AUUE.⁸⁰

George Nettleton showed remarkable abilities to set up and run an organization of this magnitude. After his appointment as director of the American

⁷⁹ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 7 October 1917.

⁸⁰ *Harry Pratt Judson Papers*, Boxes 7-8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 14 February 1919, from AUUE Paris to Judson.

University Union in October 1917 he threw himself into his duties even as he continued to run the Yale Bureau while awaiting a replacement. Initially he continued to receive his regular Professor's salary and could use all donations toward the hotel and other expenses, but as a Union employee Nettleton himself raised questions on the fairness of the arrangement. He commented however, "I shall be only too ready to turn over the Yale books."⁸¹

Nettleton seemed tireless. He wrote his wife long, chatty missives every few days, in addition to a whirlwind social schedule. He seemed a bit self conscious about this, apologized and expressed concern that "This letter will sound like one grand social calendar."⁸² He wanted to make it clear of his location in a war zone, even describing an airplane dogfight over Paris. He wrote this letter however as he travelled to his first vacation in the wine country of Bordeaux which seemed at odds with pointing out the danger of his situation.⁸³

Nettleton, however, cognizant of how important this new organization could be expressed hope that though too old at the age of 43 to actively serve in the US military that he was glad to have "personally...found something that is best suited to me. (Though) It isn't a bit heroic."⁸⁴ In his long, thorough and thoughtful letters to Mary he noted, "My one luxury is in writing you."⁸⁵ Though he complained about a lack of responses since he had "always written twice a week, sometimes oftener."⁸⁶

⁸¹ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 9 December 1917.

⁸² Ibid. 14 October 1917.

⁸³ Ibid. 2 February 1918.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 14 October 1917.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 4 November 1917. Yes, an English Professor wrote "oftener."

Even in the midst of standing up the Union, the Professor had concerns that about the AUUE preparations for the future and hoped they “shall have something to show beyond the running of the Union itself here as a University Club.”⁸⁷ This despite the attention and accolades showered down on the director and his staff from both allied and American sources.

In addition to his busy work and social calendar, Nettleton kept interesting and unusual company both in Paris and in his other travels. A couple of names jumped out of the letters, first of all in a December 1917 letter he commented on the help of American expatriate Edith Wharton, 1921 Pulitzer prize winning author of *Age of Innocence*.⁸⁸ She eagerly supported AUUE guests and placed quite a few American troops in French homes in a personal “exchange program.” Also he entertained Dr. Livingston Farrand and his wife in 1917, the head of the Rockefeller Foundation in Europe and later President at Cornell.⁸⁹ Nettleton wrote Mary a glowing letter about his encounter with Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of over the air transmissions and famous electrical engineer and famous worldwide as the inventor of the radio. The memorable meeting occurred on the train on the way to Rome to scout out new AUUE locations.⁹⁰

At this moment, October 1918, the AUUE sat at a high water mark in support, whether counted by Universities, benefactors, or donations. With 140 plus colleges as participants, including Trinity College (eventually Duke University) and North Carolina State College (now University) who paid dues though neither institution

⁸⁷ Ibid. 9 December 1917

⁸⁸ Ibid. 2 December 1917.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

became part of the executive board. A June 1918 Alumni Newsletter from NC State noted hopefully that their students and graduates can broaden their horizons as “Oxford and Cambridge Universities...encourage visits to them by American college men,” since State was a “financial supporter.”⁹¹

The mention of Oxford and Cambridge represented a broadening shift in the American University Union’s focus. Since the fighting took place mostly on French soil, it made sense that the first location, headquarters and most of the monetary support should reside in Paris. The Union quickly moved to place and office in London with the establishment of a branch in the autumn of 1918, and in the spring of 1919 the last branch scheduled for Rome. There was a bit of non-sequitur timing in the report on the origins of the AUUE since “In March 1917, under the auspices of the Union, an American University dinner was held at the Criterion Restaurant (in London)” which predated the chronology of the official founding.⁹² The key may be the use of the word “auspices” in this report, which allowed a bit of rhetorical flexibility without putting a note to the effect of “the organization that would eventually become the AUUE.” Of course it also may have simply been due to a typographical error.

In addition to the obvious support for the military college man, one could also speculate that since the original ten colleges mostly consisted of older, more prestigious colleges and universities, membership gave other institutions a relatively inexpensive way to make connections in the AUUE. According to the Union’s report,

⁹¹ “American University Union in Europe,” *State College Alumni News*, 1, #8 (June 1918) 1-2. Finding this article in the NC State Special Collections is what sparked my interest in the AUUE.

⁹² *The American University Union in Europe: 1917-1918*, 13.

the original ten consisted of “Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Williams and Yale.”⁹³ The report lists those schools along with seven more as having their own bureaus in Paris, but the other 120 or so member schools had only four employees for “the interests of men from other colleges and universities (which) are cared for by the Staff Secretaries.”⁹⁴ It appeared that even though one would gather from the report that all college men were equal, some college men were more equal than others depending on their school affiliation.

While George Nettleton busily set up the overseas operations Harry Pratt Judson of the University of Chicago worked stateside supporting the Union. His correspondence reflected the struggles of the organization. His chief correspondents on Union business were Nettleton and George MacLean of the University of Iowa. We actually get quite a bit of coverage from these two because Nettleton is in Paris and MacLean is in London which became the cities the majority of the soldiers went on leave in before the war, and where students flocked following the war.

The University of Chicago's biography of Judson highlights the intellect and organizational skills that not only would lead to his work with the Union but also brought him to Chicago at the behest of the University's first president. Judson was in fact the second faculty member to begin work in Chicago, arriving in 189 and he was the first head of the political science department. He became president of the university in 1907, during a dark period of money worries for the university. Judson

⁹³ Ibid. 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 5.

brought the University's budget into balance within two years and he maintained it in the black for the remainder of his administration. "Judson's cordial relations with the Rockefellers led to his involvement in several of the family's philanthropies, including the Rockefeller Foundation and the General Education Board."⁹⁵

One might wonder why the University of Chicago became so heavily involved early in the life of the AUUE, with financing as the most obvious reason. The school originally set up operations with the generous support of John D. Rockefeller who donated \$600,000 or \$16 million dollars in today's currency.⁹⁶ Even though the university was less than thirty years old when World War I began for the United States, Chicago had attained an academic and financial level to gain the respect and elicit requests for support from the older, more established colleges and universities on the East Coast.

The letters of President Judson showed the workings of financing the AUUE from the home front point of view. His letters during the war pulled back the curtain on financial struggles that Nettleton in Paris never saw until after hostilities ceased.

Finances appeared to be an issue for the Union and Judson's correspondence with the President H. B. Hutchins of the University of Michigan and meat packing magnate Harold H. Swift indicate some of the problems in the early days of the Union. The board of trustees for the AUUE had set \$30,000 as a

⁹⁵ "Harry Pratt Judson", Office of the President, University of Chicago. Accessed 3 May 2016, <https://president.uchicago.edu/directory/harry-pratt-judson>.

⁹⁶ The University of Chicago: The Early Years. Accessed 3 May 2016, <http://www.uchicago.edu/about/history/>.

fundraising goal, but confusion appeared as to its use and which donor was responsible for what specific amount.⁹⁷

In a letter dated 17 November 1917, Judson asks President Hutchins of the University of Michigan if “the \$30,000 is a final sum or amount simply to provision for the first year, with the probability of subsequent contributions being required?”⁹⁸ He seems to already know the answer, but also notes that the “West,” his institutions’ area of responsibility was responsible for \$5000. “Counting the ‘West’ as beginning at Ohio,” he believed it should not be an issue since Michigan had promised a fifth of that amount.⁹⁹ One possibility appeared that this was in addition to the institutional dues required for colleges and universities to be members of the Union. Judson counted seventeen in that area and promised to speak with the trustees on the matter and let President Hutchins know the result.

This appeared where confusion began on supporting the Union in correspondence with Harold Swift. Swift, the first University of Chicago alumni to sit on the Board of Trustees, was the heir to the Swift Meat Packing dynasty and became obligated to under-write the \$3000 that Chicago was responsible for, beginning with a \$1000 donation.¹⁰⁰ Then the amount of donation gets misconstrued and miscommunicated between Judson and the AUUE. By “under-write,” Swift meant he would make up any shortfalls in the Chicago donation and fill in as needed. However the correspondence to and from Judson shows that the

⁹⁷ *Harry Pratt Judson Papers*, 15 May 1918, Swift to Robertson

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 25 Nov 1916, Judson to Hutchins.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 17 November 1917.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 15 May 1918, Swift to Robertson.

AUUE along with Judson and Swift had different versions of the commitments and there existed a palpable sense of frustration on all sides.

This seemed reasonable because first numerous letters from members of the Chicago staff and alumni, along with responses, listed smaller donations to the AUUE in the name of the University. For example Scott Brown, a lawyer in the city sent a check for twenty five dollars to David Robertson, secretary to President Judson, because “This...is probably my proper proportion of the amount of \$3,000 which I understand the University of Chicago is to contribute to the (AUUE) budget for the year.”¹⁰¹

This seemed fairly straightforward, and a follow up letter to Robertson from Swift himself does everything but spell it out, but with just enough verbal wiggle room for confusion. He wants to know “how much money was recently collected through the activity of the President and yourself?”¹⁰² He also wanted the names and amounts subscribed “so that I may keep my records accordingly.”¹⁰³ Mr. Robertson responded to Swift’s request but the situation was rife with the potential for confusion. Robertson now required that Chicago donors directly mail AUUE donations to the Union’s treasurer Henry B. Thompson headquarters in New York City. This request came from Union vice chairman, University of Michigan president H. B. Hutchins via a letter to Harry Judson.¹⁰⁴ This seemed a fair request but Hutchins apparently assumed Chicago would keep track of the university’s donors and the amount therein. However Secretary Robertson grabbed the idea and began

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 25 January 1918, Brown to Robertson.

¹⁰² Ibid. 15 May 1918, Swift to Robertson.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 16 May 1918, Robertson to Swift.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 14 December 1917, Hutchins to Judson.

asking donors to send checks directly to New York, but also “use the accompanying form and also let me know.”¹⁰⁵ Instead of noting donors, consolidating checks and then forwarding them on to New York in a neat and orderly manner, the donor had to mail a check to the AUUE and a note to Chicago. Then if Robertson needed information he needed to contact New York for updated information which could take quite some time via mail, which led to a frustrated Mr. Swift as he attempted to get proper information on donations. As a Trustee of both the American University Union and the University of Chicago, Swift demanded quick and proper information.

This added an unneeded layer to the donation process along with taking any record keeping or accountability out of Robertson’s hands. Whether Robertson did not want to take the time to handle the money, or simply attempted to get the funds to the Union as soon as possible, it resulted in vast confusion as to whom and how much Chicago donated. It appeared Robertson attempted to reroute his AUUE donation duties to reduce his responsibility and work load as much as possible while still appearing supportive. In fact his response to Harold Swift’s information request includes an over the top question of “Is there anything more that I can do to secure assistance for an institution whose worth has already been recognized?”¹⁰⁶ If looking overall at Robertson’s correspondence in Judson’s name, this response is at odds with his actions and the totality of the letters he wrote to alumni and other figures. However this does raise the question of what the AUUE’s target audience thought of the services provided by the Union.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 15 January 1918, Robertson to Willoughby Walling.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 6 May 1918, Robertson to Swift.

The only evidence was in Nettleton's personal correspondence with his wife Mary because the official reports of the AUUE during the war bespeak a vibrant organization that had an embarrassment of riches and popularity in its short existence. To go from the basement to basically running a social center in downtown Paris had to have been an exhilarating process. Unfortunately current research has turned up few letters from actual "customers" of the facilities and atmosphere of the Palace Hotel and how they saw and utilized the largess that had been laid out for them. Some letters appeared written well after the war by alumni, at the request of the AUUE in order for use in fundraising, so they appear long on superlatives and light on juicy details of nightlife or even boring details such as "are the beds soft?"¹⁰⁷

There appeared one letter to Secretary Robertson however that described what an honest experience in Paris at the AUUE during the war years. Harry Kitson, a Chicago alumni who would go on to write a book on how to study in college, wrote in May of 1918 how much he enjoyed the facilities of the Union, which he called a "veritable haven of refuge to us."¹⁰⁸ In fact his "gratitude for the way the university is serving us in France" was only marred by one incident which was not the responsibility of the AUUE. The University of Chicago magazine had listed his job in the Army as infantry instead of "Field Artillery, the highest branch of the service."¹⁰⁹ Harry does go into some detail on how he is not only enjoying the "garden spots of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 1 May 1918, Kitson to Robertson.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

France” but had “learned to eat horse flesh with relish.”¹¹⁰ The one thing he does not write about in this chatty letter was what kind of wine best paired with horseflesh.

Even, maybe especially because of the looming of prohibition back in the states, there had to be interest in drinking the great wines and beers of Europe. Did they sell alcohol in the restaurant, or could the college men bring it in to use when they organizing social gatherings in the hotel? What if guests at the hotel looked for female company? With the high minded rhetoric in the founding and operation of the AUUE, one would assume they did not provide female companionship, but with the majority of French men on the front lines there had to be a demand for virile, healthy American men whether they had to pay for female companionship or not. If someone took advantage of the Union’s facilities, could they bring a young lady back to their room? After the war many war brides returned to the US with the troops, but one has to wonder what protocol existed during the war and if the Union welcomed a soldier who desired a good time.

Though not from the point of view of an AUUE customer, the one personal published account came from Lansingh’s eventual successor Rexford Tugwell, who arrived in July of 1918 with the second wave of staff from the United States. Tugwell’s autobiography *To The Lesser Heights of Morningside*, published posthumously by his undergraduate alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania gives an account of his time at the Union and though much seems glossed over,

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Tugwell gives a good description of both Paris and the Union with a more neutral eye than Nettleton.¹¹¹

Tugwell was a native New Yorker who had developed theories on government involvement in economies. Born in 1891 his Progressive parents influenced him and supported the presidential candidacy of William Jennings Bryan. He was educated at the Wharton Business School at the University of Pennsylvania for his undergraduate degree and continued on to complete his doctoral degree in economics at Columbia University where he also taught

Tugwell came to Paris by way of Seattle as a visiting professor at the University of Washington. His time there, while full of admiration for the majestic scenery and sympathetic to the plight of the working man, appeared as a time of drudgery and moroseness from Tug well's view. Whether due to a heavy teaching load, the sparseness of intellectual banter among the faculty or the general rainy weather he felt a fish out of water. Whatever the reason, following the death of his academic and intellectual guru Carlton Parker from pneumonia, he immediately jumped at the offer to join the American University Union in Paris. Though nominally still attached to the University of Washington, he took the job without hesitation and never looked back or considered a return to live and work in the Pacific Northwest.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Rexford G. Tugwell, *The Lesser Heights of Morningside* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) 98-122.

¹¹² Ibid. 99.

In the midst of the Great World War, Tugwell had not joined the military and “felt the humiliation of going to France as a civilian to do a service job.”¹¹³

Admittedly he had some appreciation for the fact that he did not have to serve in the military but his dour attitude and lack of knowledge as he headed for Paris did not bode well for his position. He “had not much idea what my duties would be” and “the war was too immediate and Paris...too much in peril for such an opportunity to seem very valuable.”¹¹⁴ His “grim hope of being useful” precluded him from “any expectation of pleasurable cultural experience” and his mood was not helped by the ship taking him overseas, which he described as “an antique,” though he praised the food “because it was French.”¹¹⁵

Upon arrival he found that he “was to help run a kind of combined club and service station for university men who would be temporarily in Paris.”¹¹⁶ A very fair description of the enterprise, with less hyperbole than Nettleton had provided and he continued that he “found a middle sized hotel of some one hundred fifty rooms converted into a club.”¹¹⁷ “It was some comfort for a soldier...to find a place in Paris where he could at least clean up or eat a passable meal” and though “there was not much possibility of improvement: food was a difficulty, but French magic made the best of what we could get.”¹¹⁸ He also had a several week overlap with his unnamed

¹¹³ Ibid, 100.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 100-101.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 100.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 103.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

predecessor, who could only be Lansingh before he settled into a comfortable working routine.¹¹⁹

The most telling line in Tugwell's autobiography followed a several page description of Paris which was sharply critical of Parisians and France and perfectly summed up a rather dismissive view to his position as Business director, "My duties required no extensive planning."¹²⁰ This point of view contrasted sharply with his predecessor's renowned ability to both plan and execute projects. Lansingh set the bar very high and seemed to anticipate the Union's needs and carried plans out flawlessly because of his meticulous organizational and social skills.

While in Paris Tugwell made little attempt to get to know his peers or the local townspeople with the exception of a few friends. Not that he had no appreciation for where he was or the experience, but in his writings he comes across as a very detached observer of all around him with little need to make human connections.

His writings did not lack interest, as in his vivid description of his sign that the war had begun favoring the Allies with the return of "an amazing decadent development: restaurants turned into places of solicitation; obscene nightclubs sprang up... (and)...Suddenly Paris seemed to be a kind of civic bordello."¹²¹ Funny, but a kind of bloodlessness to the description that makes one wonder if Tugwell himself partook since in the introduction to his posthumously published

¹¹⁹Ibid, 102-103. Not named but I believe it was Lansingh.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 108.

¹²¹ Ibid, 112.

autobiography it noted that his “successes were aided considerable by his fine and even winning appearance.”¹²²

Nettleton’s view differed strongly with Tugwell’s in his letters to his wife Mary. As his job developed he became equal parts hard working director, academic and social creature building alliances as he went along. However, after reading through hundreds of letters one realizes that running a large organization with as many competing interests as the American University Union may not have been his forte. This is not casting aspersions on his intellect, social skills or hard work, or what he eventually accomplished.

Nettleton’s biggest worry as he relayed in a June 18 1918, letter to Mary was that, “Lansingh leaves here Wednesday morning probably, at any rate in a few days....We shall miss him a lot.”¹²³ A few days later, “I can’t begin to tell you what a tower of strength he (Lansingh) has been to the Union.”¹²⁴ This might appear to be an exaggeration by Nettleton, but remember Lansingh had been not only the most dependable and organized member of his staff, but he had the Union up and running before the director had even set sail from New York. He not only knew the city, but what the expectations would be for Americans and American college men in this new venture.

Lansingh moved on to other, well deserved assignments in order to help with the war effort, but his willingness to put his own ego aside and do the hard work put Nettleton’s mind at ease, though it also set expectations extremely high when

¹²² Ibid. xv.

¹²³ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 8 June 18.

¹²⁴ Ibid 12 Jun 18.

subsequent staff members arrived. Nettleton had not changed those expectations, as his staff turned over and replacements came in.

Nettleton fretted to Mary at the delay in getting in the wholesale replacements, including Tugwell, Kimball and Beasley who were “set to sail as soon as authorization is obtained,” but obviously he worried.¹²⁵ Especially when rolling into July there was “Still no news from our Union recruits who should have sailed in June.”¹²⁶ However he seemed almost giddy about Lansingh’s successor of Tugwell because “if there is anything in a name he ought to be a good man for the Union.”¹²⁷

Nettleton felt relieved at the additions to his staff because of a slow drain on resources as they found other civilian or military work more directly involved in the war effort. In June of 1918, the war and American involvement hit full stride as “Forty odd miles away they are waging perhaps the decisive battle of the war.”¹²⁸ Though still full this affected the leave traffic to Paris which had fallen off and this allowed the AUUE to get by with a smaller staff, though “Irwin and I are now the only people in the main office and he has very serious limitations, though I am trying my best to help him.”¹²⁹

The director also wanted a vacation since he had steadily worked since his arrival and the tone of his letters reflected his desire for that, a possibility that would only happen if he could leave the Union in good hands with a complete staff. “Anson said the Trustees all thought it would be all right for me to take a short visit home but

¹²⁵ Ibid..

¹²⁶ Ibid, 8 July 1918.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 12 June 1918.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 26 June 1918.

of course the present situation alters the case...By August we shall know better where we stand.”¹³⁰ Though in fairness, this line from the letter was not particularly clear whether “where we stand” refers to the Union situation or the war situation, though it may be both. No matter, “my present prospects of leaving Paris seem poor.”¹³¹ This is a continuing theme, but before the Armistice it was his only real complaint beyond some low key grouching, “I hardly need to say that there is no chance of me coming back this summer unless things improve radically.”¹³² Work kept his mind mostly off his loved ones, but he constantly gave Mary advice and bemoaned not being there which makes it clear he missed home incredibly.

Then the missing staff members show up en masse in mid July, and “With these additions we shall be in a position to do much better work” but now there was a different problem.¹³³ Even with additional help, the staff, new and old is enduring a baptism by fire because the traffic has increased to the point that “I think now we shall have to get an additional hotel if possible, as we are swamped with room applications and registrations have doubled this month.”¹³⁴

While this might seem to be a good problem to have, since the Union paid nothing out of pocket for unused rooms or meals, it also meant that soldiers had to double and triple bunk rooms or worse get turned away. Nettleton and staff began making moves to remedy the situation because “The Union is greatly overcrowded and we are trying to negotiate for additional quarters...Tugwell, the new business

¹³⁰ Ibid, 22 June 1918.

¹³¹ Ibid, 19 June 1918.

¹³² Ibid, 8 Jun 1918.

¹³³ Ibid, 22 July 1918.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 27 July 1918.

manager, seems especially competent and very attractive personally.”¹³⁵ The last seems a bit of an unimportant aside, but was definitely a true statement after looking at pictures of Rexford Tugwell in later years; he appears a handsome man with a “Dudley Do-Right” chin and a “can-do” look about him.

Even with the massive increase in visitors however, Nettleton felt confident enough that he could head to England to spell the director there for a short vacation. “The staff in Paris...is in good shape. I like especially Professor Tugwell, our new business manager.”¹³⁶ The plan was for Nettleton “to take charge of the London Office for about a week to let Professor Cuncliffe go off on a vacation. He has been rather run down in health and had a slight attack of the shingles.”¹³⁷ Though Nettleton felt more confident about his Paris Office, this was not taking time off, though the change in scenery and getting back to some of his pre-war haunts must have felt like one. But still “I fear my prospects of even a flying visit (home) are very, very slim.”¹³⁸ However, the new staff and time off problems rode atop another issue that Nettleton dealt with, money to run the Union.

World War I as the first war with a fully mobilized population had a unique place among America’s wars where a sense of obligation led to the upper classes of the United States contributing monetarily to the war effort. This reminded me of “noblesse oblige” and it seems to be one of the motivations for George Nettleton’s service. Though he not paid an overwhelming amount as a professor at Yale, his background attending Andover Academy and Yale point to an aristocratic upbringing

¹³⁵ Ibid, 3 August 1918.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 11 August 1918.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 22 July 1918.

even if he appeared not to have the resources to back it up. Christopher Cappazola's idea of "coercive volunteerism" during this period applies here, where a professor was worried about money for his family but also concerned about the perception of taking too much because this was his service to country.¹³⁹ Interestingly while George brainstormed and looked for ideas from his wife in his letters, it appears that he considered himself the final authority on money and made clear this was something he must figure out himself.

"I suppose that for the coming year (Name unreadable) will put me on leave without salary which was the arrangement I had suggested to Anson....it is rather a question of how much I should contribute myself toward keeping the Union budget low."¹⁴⁰ He was being magnanimous, and trying to contribute his own salary to the war effort, without putting too much pressure on his wife because she had to run a household and pay bills. Though he arranged a line of credit available to her if needed, she seemed hesitant to use it. "The last thing I should wish would be to have it appear that I was accepting too much from the Union."¹⁴¹ Bureau chiefs are getting their regular salaries, "but as I am a General Officer of the Union, not of the Yale Bureau, my case is different though the obligations of my position are greater in the matter of entertaining."¹⁴² Nettleton did not want for expenses, which included meals and other social ways of connecting with important people in the various war support organizations, the military and French officials, but he was deeply concerned about appearances.

¹³⁹ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 83.

¹⁴⁰ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 19 June 1918.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

The Union's problem was "wrestling with the problem of insufficient accommodations for our men. The Union is full to overflowing all the time."¹⁴³ This appeared to be a good problem, because the AUUE had no need to make up any shortfalls but did not significantly increase their cash flow, and they did not "want to operate two separate hotels."¹⁴⁴ This, along with paying the new staff had the potential to financially hurt an organization currently running in the black. However, just as his short stint as substitute London director headed to its end, he received an urgent telegram "to return immediately to settle, if possible the question of additional hotel accommodations on which we were working when I left Paris...(and required to)...return not later than 21st of August."¹⁴⁵ Even a working change of pace and semi-vacation led Nettleton back to France to help put out administrative fires. Home, for even a short visit, seemed a long way away.

The potential for keeping the Union solvent and relevant worried the director even as traffic and finances sat at an all time high. By late June he told Mary that "We have now registered 10,000 college men from about 350 different colleges, and 134 colleges have formally joined the Union and pay membership fees. The treasurer's report from Mr. Thompson, just received, shows that we have received \$22,000 in dues from colleges and \$30,000 from private subscriptions-a total of considerably over the \$50,000 which we hoped for the first year's budget. We are running well within our budget at present, even on the \$25,000 a year plan on which we started,

¹⁴³ Ibid, 6 Sep 1918.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 27 August 1918.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 19 August 1918.

but next month with the new accessions to the force our monthly expenditures will begin to rise. We shall come out well ahead on the years account in any case.”¹⁴⁶

His growing pessimism on the ability of the Union to continue to operate after the war, prompted him to seek other avenues of more permanent cash flow, even as things appeared well. He knew the advantage of his location and also knew that the huge numbers of people in the defacto capital of the Allied war effort gave him access to potential donors that the trustees back in New York simply did not have. He “talked to Mr. Embree concerning the possibility of assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation for the endowment of the Union on a permanent basis. Anson approved the suggestion and so I got in touch with him here at once. All this is, of course, private negotiation [*sic*] but the big plans for the future require firm support. It is an extraordinarily interesting problem, but one that will take time to work out.”¹⁴⁷ It turned out his personal timeline changed because after months of planning he finally felt he had time for a well deserved vacation home.

The Union hummed along as Nettleton headed home to Connecticut. With committees covering everything from entertainment to library and art, there were also committees to reach out to the local community as well as academics. “As the outgrowth of informal conferences with officers of the American University Union, responsible French educational authorities have formulated plans for putting at the disposal of American military authorities the educational resources of France.”¹⁴⁸ The French wanted to find ways to utilize school facilities and infrastructure that

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 26 June 1918.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 6 September 1918.

¹⁴⁸ *The American University Union in Europe: 1917-1918*, 4.

stood vacant during the war years, but also looked toward the future, positioning their schools in readiness to increase student enrollment, and by inference, help finances.

The American Union had deep roots in Paris and moved out to set up additional headquarters in both London and Rome. They were a vibrant part of the military, social and cultural fabric of the American Expeditionary Force in Europe and important enough to grab the attention of Commanding General John Pershing, until something shocking happened.

The war ended.

Chapter 3

Cracks in the Foundation: Organization and Conflict

Sunrise on the morning of November 11, 1918 broke noisily on the American line of the Western Front of World War I as artillery and rifle fire flew over the trenches between the Allied and Central Powers. With trenches located almost exclusively in France, most soldiers on both sides kept their heads down to avoid death or injury. Any veteran soldier looked out for himself and his friends, but there were particularly important reasons on this November day. Artillerymen busily fired shells, because each battery hoped to be the last to fire in the Great War. The truce was signed but some idiot in the rear had decided that the Armistice taking effect at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month had a certain ring to it. However the American Doughboys did not care about symmetry at the moment, they simply hunkered down, waited and hoped they avoided earning a more dubious honor, that of being the last American to die in a war that had seen over two million Americans travel to a part of the world they had never seen before. Dying last was an honor they preferred to forego.¹⁴⁹

George Nettleton had arrived back in France from a much needed vacation to Connecticut. He was excited to be “Back at the old stand just in time” though he wryly noted that as the ship docked, the American soldiers unloading the ship greeted those aboard with “Too Late! war’s over! go on home!”¹⁵⁰ He had many

¹⁴⁹ That honor would go to one Harry Gunther of Baltimore, Maryland. Dan Rodricks, “The Sad, Senseless End of Henry Gunther,” *Baltimore Sun*, 11 November 2008. Accessed 16 June 2017, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2008-11-11/news/0811100097_1_henry-gunther-11th-month-war-i.

¹⁵⁰ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 11 November 1918. Lower case spelling as written.

stories of celebrations on the end of the war, including dinners, a parade along the Champs-Élysées and noted the changed tenor of ocean cruises now that passengers and crews no longer worried about submarines. However he had already begun thinking and working on the future of the Union since the plan in place before the war had been “entirely modified now by the dramatic and abrupt ending of hostilities.”¹⁵¹ As he wrote later, even though the Allies had been optimistic for the results of the last great push, “The army and the war relief organizations fully expected another winter of it.”¹⁵²

This abrupt ending caught everyone by surprise, and without the threat of war coloring every part of everyday life in Paris everyone the AUUE staff began thinking of home. While these thoughts made complete sense, with two million American troops suddenly free to explore without the threat of returning to the trenches, the Palace Royal got very busy very quickly. Not only did Nettleton have to cope with the largest number of college men the Union staff had ever seen, he also had to look toward an uncertain future and plan and commit the Union and its resources to a post war path.

First Nettleton began negotiating contracts with the hotels in their three cities of Paris, London and, very recently, Rome. Rome’s Hotel Royal arrived last in the AUUE circle, but he wrote he was “glad they are making a good showing there of their activity, this will be helpful to later educational arrangements in Italy after the war.”¹⁵³ In this initial post war period the director began looking well ahead for his

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid, 28 November 1918.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 24 November 1918.

organization, despite the fact that “by spring I imagine it may become desirable to close up the arrangement.”¹⁵⁴

The problem, of course was that Nettleton tried “to find out something about how long troops will be left here, but there are no two similar guesses.”¹⁵⁵ No solid answers fueled a great deal of uncertainty with every type of rumor circulating around Paris. By the 18th of November, he became more certain hoping “the Declaration of Peace may be signed before Easter,” though it turned out the Treaty of Versailles to officially end the war was not signed until June of 1919.¹⁵⁶

Despite concerns Professor Nettleton engaged fully in what happened in Paris. First he searched to find a solution to the increasingly inadequate size of the Royal Palace Hotel. Apparently the Union had been in negotiation with the Wagram Hotel, which while only a block from the Champs also vastly increased the rent. Though the location of the Wagram was better the arrival of troops now acting as tourists had filled all the rooms and this had put that idea in abeyance especially since “some of the college bureaus will close next summer.”¹⁵⁷ The reduction in bureau staff led to Nettleton’s decision to “not exercise the Wagram option.”¹⁵⁸ With fewer permanent paying tenants in the future simply juggling the present books would be a task, even though the AUUE obligation under its contract guaranteed the income for only two weeks past the signing of the armistice.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 14 November 1918.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 18 November 1918.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 24 November 1918.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 14 November 1918.

With all these logistical requirements the question became how to renegotiate the lease. If the troops started leaving in large numbers before the official peace treaty took effect money could become an issue sooner rather than later. He also wanted to set the stage for a Union that went well beyond the current “club” atmosphere and he envisioned an AUUE future where the organization would be the center of a robust exchange of ideas and students between the United States and Europe.

Nettleton’s first priority became trying to keep a roof over the heads of the Union. Since the contract for the Royal Palace in Paris expired fifteen days after the Armistice, Nettleton had to quickly find a solution to extend the contract. There were several issues to be resolved, but the most troublesome from the AUUE’s view was the lack of alternatives. Paris was packed with soldiers looking for accommodations, not to mention the delegates and staff of those countries arriving to negotiate the final peace settlement. It seemed now with no more fighting, most of the free world wanted a part of the reflected glory of winning the war. This made the logistics of running a hotel for college men more difficult and expensive, but Nettleton found a way.¹⁵⁹

On December 3, 1918, he wrote in weary triumph to Mary, “we are fortunate to have a roof over our heads.”¹⁶⁰ Nettleton had negotiated a six month extension until June of 1919, with a continuing month to month to the next October if necessary. Even though the pressure for rooms made it unnecessary at the moment, the AUUE continued its guarantee to make up any shortages below 2/3s

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 3 December 1918.

occupancy if the Palace Royal failed to fill the rooms. The Union had to increase room and meal prices slightly though still well within the local Paris rate considering the pressure from the humanity streaming into the city.¹⁶¹

Accommodations of all kinds reached capacity and when it would change was impossible to guess, so “in many ways the Union is thriving even more than ever...(with only the heating at the hotel)...not being adequate for both rooms and hot water at the same time.”¹⁶² Even this minor hiccup seemed solvable however in the near future as war supplies headed back into civilian use because “the bad quality of the coal is responsible for much of the trouble” not the hotel itself.¹⁶³ On the infrastructural front at least the Union sat in a comfortable status quo position even if at this point it was not yet permanent. There were two other major problems looming in the future; personnel and money.

However, just as Nettleton began getting a handle on the future, he one of those problems kept him worrying about the present, rather than the future. That issue was his staff.

He found himself scrambling to right the AUUE ship as soon as he came back to Paris from vacation, and just before Thanksgiving 1918 he wrote, “I’d like to be free to develop our larger plans for the future, but the immediate task is to try and make the Union run smooth again.”¹⁶⁴ Nettleton had been shocked to find on his return that “the place was rather at sixes and sevens (but) was gradually working out

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid, 4 December 1918.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 27 November 1918,

again.”¹⁶⁵ An unnamed individual or individuals caused the issues and he hinted to Mary, “you can read between the lines if you remember my accounts of our various staff appointees.”¹⁶⁶ For the first time in his chatty letters home, his frustration began to surface, “I can’t do everything personally” even as he tried “to gauge how long we shall carry on here.”¹⁶⁷

The issue of personnel became an immediate concern of Nettleton’s in the months after the war but he seems oddly reticent in his letters to Mary to name names or go terribly deep into details on personnel, but then proceeds to do so by naming names, though not giving the detail one would hope. An oddly schizophrenic combination which for the reader can be frustrating since tells his wife, “you can read a lot between the lines since you know some of our previous difficulties.”¹⁶⁸ The reason for this reticence was unclear, especially since the personnel problems he wrote about were in an earlier letter on the failings of one Rexford Guy Tugwell.

How did the young Rexford Tugwell specifically impact the American University Union during World War I? Well, in the opinion of several officers of the organization, quite poorly, though he was not the only one. In his letters to Mary, George Nettleton comments on a massive change in personnel at the AUUE at the end of December 1918, “We are to have quite a house cleaning as Kimball and Beasley are both leaving in January.”¹⁶⁹ While the director does not specifically

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 27 November 1918.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 28 November 1918.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 22 Dec 1918.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 22 December 1918.

write of Kimball's shortcomings, he is quite clear on Beasley, who "is a far cry from success" and believed that their work could be covered by only one new addition "if we can get people of the right sort."¹⁷⁰ He continued that he needed "one to replace Tugwell, one to replace Miss Anne Hughes and (as noted) one staff secretary to replace Beasley and Kimball."¹⁷¹ He even noted that one of his most competent staff members "Macmahon...is doing well and takes genuine interest in the work, though he is censorious by nature. Most of his criticisms of his colleagues, unfortunately, have been well founded."¹⁷² The prime focus of both McMahon and the director's ire seemed to be the aforementioned junior professor from the University of Washington.

Apparently the Tugwell had no diplomacy skills in an atmosphere that required it and ended up a negative in the Union's operations and atmosphere, and had derailed a smooth running unit before Nettleton headed home on vacation. After realizing how dire the situation had become, by the 9th of December he "Cabled Anson (Phelps of Yale) for a business manager to replace Tugwell."¹⁷³ Even with Tugwell out of the picture and a mountain of work on the director's desk however "we are now running much more smoothly since I took over Tugwell's work."¹⁷⁴ He goes on to say that "Tugwell's departure will clear the air considerably."¹⁷⁵ Despite the extra work, Nettleton marvels to his wife that by "straightening out matters that are greatly muddled," he "shall end by being quite a

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 3 and 22 December 1918.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 22 December 1918.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 9 December 1918.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 22 December 1918.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 9 December 1918.

business man in spite of myself.”¹⁷⁶ The unknown English Professor from Yale not only became a business man, but making connections that had the potential to greatly support the Union and their mission into the post-war years.

The most unfortunate part of Tugwell seemed to be a general lack of competence that required Nettleton to focus more on the day-to-day activities of the Union, with little time to cope with the sudden end of the war. On the 3rd of December, he wrote Tugwell wanted to go home because of illness.¹⁷⁷ The director is not at all concerned at losing him because “he proved during my absence utterly unable to swing his part of the work. The most charitable view was that he was altogether too young and inexperienced to handle the job and he did not get on well either with the men in the Bureaus or on the general staff.”¹⁷⁸

Not surprisingly Tugwell wrote little of the end of his tenure at the Union even though he does speak of a slow recovery from the flu which seemed to be the “sickness” that Nettleton wrote about that drove Tugwell back to the states. There seemed to be little regret from the staff and bureaus at the AUUE or from Tugwell himself as he headed home, “As I left the pier I mentally checked off another of life’s adventures. I was not sorry to put it in the past.”¹⁷⁹ In fact the experience had taken a toll on the still young academic, even if not in his autobiography. Such a deep toll in fact that he even considered going back up to his parent’s farm in upstate New York permanently following the war. It is purely supposition but one could surmise

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 22 December 1918.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 3 December 1918.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Tugwell, *Lesser Heights of Morningside*, 122.

that estranging everyone in the Union could not have made the last few months in Paris very pleasant and he needed, at the very least, space to recharge.¹⁸⁰

Because of the Union's continuing staff issues and the need for Nettleton to cover so many aspects of AUUE operations, his ability to forward plan was severely limited especially "since I have to take over much of Tugwell's work."¹⁸¹ After "Cabling Anson for a replacement to succeed Tugwell," he then received word that Anson was "sending a Mr. Smith as business director to replace Tugwell" which though he complained that "we haven't had the staff appointees we have needed" meant he could dive back into work since some new members appeared on the way to help.¹⁸² Though some members such as "Miss de Schweinitz...will come back...next week" the arrival of his new assistant director, William Tenney Brewster had been particularly satisfying to Nettleton who was eager to have him "installed in charge of the Educational Department."¹⁸³ Brewster had a sterling reputation, graduate of Columbia and had been English Professor and Provost at Barnard College.

The Educational Department had become a much larger undertaking sooner than anyone had predicted. Bored troops began casting about for something to do and the Union was "flooded with letters of inquiry concerning the chances of study at French and British Universities."¹⁸⁴ Fortunately since his staff in "The London Branch...(was) coming in strong on that (educational) part of the work," Nettleton

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 122-123.

¹⁸¹ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 19 December 1918.

¹⁸² Ibid, 10 and 28 December 1918..

¹⁸³ Ibid, 19 December 1918

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 4 December 1918.

had less to worry about in that area and following Brewster's arrival in Paris, he was "handling the questions of university men who wished to attend foreign universities."

¹⁸⁵ It was this part of the Union work that Nettleton thought most important for the continuing survival of the organization, so the director with relief handed over that part of the Paris and London AUUE operations.

Nettleton stood up the Educational Department during the war, but it gained in importance upon cessation of hostilities. The Union attempted to help the Army as they dealt with soldiers not needed on the front lines any longer, but who had to be available on the ground while negotiations on the final treaty continued. The commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John Pershing not only had the soldiers in a holding pattern because of a lack of transport home but until all the signatories approved the Treaty of Versailles military leaders had little idea how many and how long the American troops were needed for occupation and peacekeeping. It made little sense however to continually train soldiers in close order drill and weapons qualification with the fighting presumably finished.

One option was attending a European school. Oxford and Cambridge made it a point to encourage Americans serving with the American Expeditionary Force to take classes on their campuses. Since the British Isles became mostly a pass through point for troops headed to the front in France, this was never fully implemented during hostilities, but following the Armistice, even though most troops were either in France or deployed to Germany, the AEF sent college men to classes in Great Britain. Only 2,000 actually enrolled, but considering the small number of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 4 and 19 December 1918.

schools and the logistics involved the number was significant. French schools were closer and soon over “8,000 (soldiers were) in the technical schools and universities of France.”¹⁸⁶

Between England and France over 10,000 soldiers enrolled in European colleges, and other than paying for transportation, room and board, the infrastructure existed to start classes. These universities however only opened their doors “to men who had done initial college work at home the opportunity (in order) to study further.”¹⁸⁷ However, troops who completed their high school diplomas but had no college ended up in limbo as academically beyond the unit level instructors but not allowed to take higher level classes. According to historian Wholfeld, leaders “argued that they had an obligation to deal with all the college applicants” and a need to help with their personal and educational goals.¹⁸⁸ The American Expeditionary Force University (AEFU) attempted to fill that void.

AEFU was a unique educational initiative to stand up a college for soldiers in Europe, an effort spearheaded by military and civilian authorities including the leadership of the American University Union. In order to understand the impact of college men in the ranks we need to explore this short four month experiment which had the progressive era goal that presumed any soldier should be able to pursue an education if they had the inclination, regardless of class and financial constraints.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. At a personal level, one of those 8,000 was my grandfather, a draftee artilleryman in the First Infantry Division, who, according to family legend, spent an enjoyable several months at the Sorbonne. He later gained a reputation as a lady’s man and it makes me wonder if much of that was due to his Southern charm and experience in France.

¹⁸⁷ Oscar M. Voorhees, “The American University at Beaune: An American University in France,” *The Phi Beta Kappa Key*, 3, 12 (May 1919) Accessed 2 March 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42913340>.581.

¹⁸⁸ Rae Wahl Wohlfeld, “Preparing World War I Soldiers for Peacetime: The Army’s University in France,” *Adult Education Quarterly*, 39, 4 (Summer 1989) 189.

One of the eyewitnesses to the hope and chaos of the AEFU was Second Lieutenant John Hezekiah ("Hezzie") Pattrick.

In March of 1919, Hezzie wrote to his parents about moving to the French city of Beaune to take part in the AEF University. His letter, by turns sarcastic and hopeful had a core of pleasant good humor about the situation, even though he admitted he "never tackled a proposition with less interest than breaking up and coming down here, but it looks better after getting here and I have no doubts now but it will be considerable better than simply laying around Langres."¹⁸⁹

The Army agreed with Hezzie. The leadership hoped the AEF University was going to be "considerable better than laying around."¹⁹⁰ Commanders were anxious about having over a million troops with time on their hands. This additional free time led to military and discipline problems rising rapidly after the Armistice and they hoped to find something that would both educate and interest the troops as they waited for the transportation and logistics to unsnarl in order to take them back to the United States. The Army, in a Progressive Era style initiative, began sending the troops back to school.¹⁹¹

One idea came from "A group of civilian and Army educators (who) set out to transform the existing wartime instructional programs into a peacetime educational system."¹⁹² Quite an undertaking considering the wide variety of educational levels among American troops with military entrance requirements that had no requirement

¹⁸⁹ JH Pattrick, "Hezzie' Goes to War: World War I through the Eyes of a Mid-Missourian" Historical Collection-University of Missouri-Columbia Museum of Anthropology. Accessed 5 April 2016, <https://anthromuseum.missouri.edu/patrickwwi/ordersaefuniv.shtml>.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Meigs, "Crash Course Americanism."

¹⁹² Wohlfield, "Preparing World War I Soldiers for Peacetime," 187.

for the completion of high school. If the Army provided classes there had to be a variety to meet the wide array of educational levels of the troops.

Lower level classes had already begun and over 200,000 troops received instruction at the unit level, most typically at “Post and Divisional Schools.”¹⁹³ These schools had already been set up to train in Army tactics and standards. Instructors were already in place that had experience in dealing with soldiers and motivating them to succeed. These instructors, mostly enlisted non-commissioned officers, could teach classes in fields such as “blacksmithing, automobile repair, telegraphy” and other courses “to cover the possible needs of members of a society moving into the twentieth century.”¹⁹⁴ In addition non-commissioned officers (NCOs) offered academic classes so that troops could earn a high school diploma. However a large number of men had already graduated from secondary school or had college with academic needs beyond the divisional schools. The Army tasked a few of these soldiers to supplement the traditional Army instructors, but pressure rose to provide the balance of these troops higher level classes to keep them occupied.¹⁹⁵ The idea of the AEF University came into this grey area.

The logistical and academic challenges faced by the AEF University appeared staggering with American officials estimating over 40,000 troops might attend. The logistical requirements ended up fairly straightforward and simple for an Army that had trained, clothed, fed, equipped and transported over two million soldiers across the Atlantic Ocean in less than a year.

¹⁹³ Oscar M. Voorhees, “The American University at Beaune”, 580.

¹⁹⁴ Meigs, “Crash Course Americanism,” 37.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

A combined team of civilian and military officials determined that former field hospitals might serve as training centers, which were fortunately underutilized during the hostilities, but still available for AEF use until all the soldiers went back to the States. After touring the facilities which had “bunk space, laboratories and classrooms,” the leaders decided to establish the main effort and headquarters at Beaune and “Allery as the location of the agricultural school.”¹⁹⁶ The “go” came in January of 1919 and classes began on the 15th of March with “309 faculty members and over 5,000 students,” and with that the Army met its goal to accommodate all interested students.¹⁹⁷

Because high school diplomas were not required to enlist in the US military, and records spotty in the former war zone, leaders decided to allow the soldiers “a larger degree of self-selection than most colleges allowed.”¹⁹⁸ The President of the AEFU, Colonel Livingston Reeves was adamant and practical on this point thinking “it best to accept a student’s statement about his preparation until it became apparent that he could not handle the subject matter; then he could transfer to other programs available at the site.”¹⁹⁹ The entry requirements may have been looser, but the requirements to complete the classes focused on allowing troops to transfer these credits as they hopefully returned to, or started college after returning home.

It is difficult today to determine whether the AEF University succeeded in this goal of beginning soldiers on the road to further education once the troops headed home because of a lack of follow up evidence. There does however seem to be

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 190.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 192.

¹⁹⁸ Wohlfield, “Preparing World War I Soldiers for Peacetime,” 191.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

some question of rigor in these classes if one goes outside of the reports generated by the leadership of the school, and for that we go back to Hezzie Patrick.

Hezzie's letter, written the 7th of March 1919, a week before classes started in Beaune reflected both the massive undertaking and the confusion it caused. Originally sent down to teach in the Law School, he could not do so because he had "no degree in law," but he had something the Law School did not, "The one law book...of any kind or description in the whole law school."²⁰⁰ After offering to loan his book to the school, he wandered to several different departments, all eager to have him as an instructor, before settling on teaching a course in the Business Department. He "outlined the course" he submitted it to a "Captain, who is not at all anxious to work overtime on it, (who) thought it just the thing" and let him "go ahead and teach the whole thing."²⁰¹

This even though the course was Business Law and, as mentioned, Patrick lacked a law degree. No wonder that his comment "it looks like a circus has hit town" seemed to apply to both the physical appearance of the Beaune campus along with the classroom standards therein.²⁰² In the meantime, as Hezzie dealt with his burgeoning teaching career, George Nettleton left the logistical headaches of the growing AEFU to his newly arrived assistant director William Brewster of Columbia, to deal with a generous gift to the Union that could secure a permanent location for the Union, or become its greatest albatross, the "Maison des Etudiants."

²⁰⁰ Patrick, "Hezzie Goes to War," 2.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid, 3.

The “Maison des Etudiants” was an opportunity on the surface that seemed too good to be true. The Municipality of Paris gave the AUUE the gift of a sizeable chunk of land in downtown Paris. Its intention was for the Union to construct on the land a building that would allow the Union to carry on its stated future goal to encourage student exchanges between the United States and France. It would have offices, classrooms and even some temporary lodging for visiting students and faculty. Nettleton reported “...on Thursday we had a meeting which marked the definite absorption of the “Maison des Etudiants” in the University Union.”²⁰³ “the presence of the Vice President of the Municipal Council of Paris, gave an official tinge to the gift of land for the site of the building. I became President of the Maison Association which is a legal holding company to take title to property abroad. Until the ‘Maison’ is built the organization will be chiefly on paper.”²⁰⁴ A generous gift with a catch, the Union had to raise the funds to design and build it, and in the economic downturn that followed the war that would be a tall order.

Nettleton mentions this potential issue in a January note “it seems to me that I shall surely be back at Yale for the opening of the next college year. But next summer the bulk of the work of the Union as a war relief organization should certainly be accomplished, and the permanent plans for the Maison des Etudiants definitely shaped. I could not in any case remain for the time it will take to build the Maison-probably two years. During the interim the Union will, of course, maintain headquarters in Paris, though probably not in this hotel after next summer. That transition can be accomplished under other leadership. The Union is now so firmly

²⁰³ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 24 Feb 1919.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

established that it seems impossible for it to miscarry in any way. I shall not, of course, dream of leaving it until next summer. It is at the very height of its activity and it is essential, especially without any business manager and with an inadequate staff, to keep on for at least the next six months...But I feel that the first two critical years of its history will have ensured the importance of the work.”²⁰⁵ Nettleton had a firm grasp on where his organization headed but it would turn into a much more complicated process than imagined.

Beyond the monetary issues there also were the legal niceties to tend to. They “had the charter meeting of the Maison des Etudiants-Bliss, Hyde, Nettleton, Thompson and Van Dyke being the charter members to sign the necessary legal papers.”²⁰⁶ They “are pushing along as rapidly as possible while Mr. Thompson is here. The legal complications are many but I think everything else is straightening out.”²⁰⁷ Then in that same letter, the first sign of frustration with the trustees of the Union came out and instead of the ever loyal employee of the Union, Nettleton washed his hands of the issues he is having training new employees and complained of his inability to return home.

“I don’t know what arrangements the Trustees will make for another year, but they ought to plan ahead. I shall talk it over with Mr. Thompson before he leaves of course.”²⁰⁸ In fact though he was cautiously optimistic about the new arrivals, “Our new business manager, I think, will prove excellent. He is taking hold in the right spirit. The three women have arrived...It is too early to size them up, but I hope they

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 1 January 1919.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 21 January 1919.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 27 Jan 1919.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

will turn out all right. We haven't had our share of luck in the appointees by the Union staff hitherto." Nettleton's frustration with the trustees previous track record of sending over unqualified staff that could not handle the workload of the Union infuriated him.²⁰⁹ With the exception of a very small paid cadre overseas, no one had the Union's best interests as their top priority. Several of the full-time employees were either incompetent or ill suited to the work, and with a staff varying between five and eight most of the war, even one misplaced hire had an outsized influence on the efficient working and planning of the Union. Nettleton would eventually have to rebuild the personnel in his organization several times before returning home and frustration came out in a letter to his wife, where instead of the ever loyal employee of the Union, he washed his hands of the issues he was having training new employees which would not allow him to return home.

It is worth noting that Nettleton's post war tone in his letters reflected a tone not apparent earlier, which may have been because of his perceived inability to either go home soon or see his family. Since everything remained in limbo he repeatedly told his wife and children not to visit as he attempted to get out by early summer. The letter makes it obvious however that he missed his family immensely and his frustration over the unknown future seemed to have hit him particularly hard as the winter of 1918 dragged on. Did the fact that Nettleton had to work incredibly hard after the Armistice burn him out? Not to mention that "It has been dismal and

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 20 February 1919.

gloomy (though)...now we are through with January at least, and getting on towards spring.”²¹⁰

Yet, however glum Nettleton seemed, the Royal Palace Hotel overflowed with soldiers, the Union had heavy involvement in what would become the AEF University Union in Beaune along with helping connect college men to Universities in both France and Great Britain. He also mentioned that “with the rapid removal of American Forces from Italy, it doesn’t seem that we should be justified in maintaining large quarters, though we may retain an office.”²¹¹ This allowed Nettleton to concentrate on his two primary locations because “our new business manager, Mr. Smith, arrived yesterday...he will not be a Lansingh, but I think there is little likelihood of his turning out to be another Tugwell.”²¹² Very soon thereafter he commented that Smith “is taking hold in fine shape.” Though the director had plenty to keep him busy, it was finally getting manageable. Then in early March his assistant director William T. Brewster of Columbia turned the organization upside down by sending a letter critical of Nettleton and his stewardship to the board of trustees in the US.

Initially Nettleton seemed in shock he remarked “The Union has certainly been a big success, and I hate to have its future plans marred in any way by the dispute.”²¹³ However he began to gather allies, particularly from Brewster’s school, “Dr. Krans, the Columbia Bureau man here, is surprised at Brewster’s action and is sympathetic with our plans for the future. Incidentally he hasn’t any sympathy with

²¹⁰ Ibid, 24 February 1919.

²¹¹ Ibid, 26 February 1919.

²¹² Ibid, 24 February 1919.

²¹³ Ibid, 2 March 1919.

Brewster. Thinks he has acted wretchedly-which is comforting since Brewster is a Columbia man.”²¹⁴ However he had to begin damage control on this issue when the Union needed full attention for the future such as dealing with the municipality, “we have just received...votes of satisfaction at the news of the gift of a site for the Maison des Etudiants from the city of Paris. They don’t suspect trouble.”²¹⁵ Even Nettleton’s eyes and ears with the Trustees, Anson Stokes Phelps (Secretary of the AUUE) remained in the dark as to what the letter said, though he did have a copy of Brewster’s follow-on resignation letter in hand, “but hadn’t heard any of the details of the controversy.”²¹⁶

In fact Nettleton wrote the best summation of what might have been in the letter just before leaving Europe when he inadvertently ran into Brewster in the hotel while waiting for a ship to take him home for the last time. “I told him that the real question at issue was not whether our views as to future plans for the Union differed or not but whether he had acted in a fair and friendly fashion in writing a letter, with implications and charges of neglect of duty, without presenting those charges to his colleagues and without hinting at resignation of office before mailing his letters to all the trustees. He said he would think the matter over and might write me again.”²¹⁷ Unfortunately that was as close to a copy of the damning letter as was available among the Nettleton papers.

One interesting note was that as devastated, angry and betrayed as Nettleton feels, he had not taken his eye off his ultimate goal of getting home as soon as

²¹⁴ Ibid, 7 March 1919.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 2 March 1919.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 13 Mar 1919.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 22 May 1919.

possible. In earlier letters, he would have probably tried to stay on to shore up both the Union and Maison, but that does not even cross his mind because though the controversy may “complicate matters, though I think that by early summer they would secure some director for next year.”²¹⁸ This was a man counting the hours.

Until he got on the ship for New York Nettleton had several months to attempt to minimize the impact of Brewster. His one big handicap appeared that Brewster had resigned but not yet made a move to leave. According to Nettleton, this bizarre situation with a mutinous assistant director was directly due to the Trustees whom he blamed in a letter to Mary that they “had accepted Brewster’s resignation ‘at his pleasure.’ I trust this latter phrase will not prove a joke. So far I have been unable to find out definitely how long he will stay on. He talked of going back in May, and is at present, putting in practically all of his time with the Army Overseas Educational Commission...However, he continues to draw Union salary. It seems like an impossible contradiction.”²¹⁹ It was certainly untenable and awkward.

Nettleton fought Brewster for attention by the AUUE board. He became livid, “We were glad to have one of the Trustees (Dr. Finley) look in upon us. Brewster gave him his version of affairs first, but Paul and I fortunately saw him also. It is disgusting-this whole business-but the end will come at last...I have to keep my mouth shut, and my letter writing style is sadly cramped when I make any allusion even remotely to the Ass. Director (I didn’t intend the abbreviation to be so significant.)”²²⁰ In spite of the attempt at humor, the director was not in anything like

²¹⁸ Ibid, 13 Mar 1919.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 30 March 1919.

²²⁰ Ibid. Parentheses and capitalization of “Ass Director” are as written

a playful mood. Brewster's behavior remained unacceptable "The only charitable explanation is that he isn't in rational health. However he has had plenty of time to express regret for never having discussed with any of the Executive Committee the possibility of his resignation. I feel sure that he must realize that both the language of his first letter were discourteous to say the least, but he has indicated no regret."²²¹

One can barely imagine the sense of betrayal that had to be palpable among the staff. The bizarre wording from the trustees meant that not only would Brewster continue to draw his salary, but he no longer worked with the Union staff and yet still lived at the Palace Royal Hotel. Nettleton groused, "I don't suppose it occurred to any of the Trustees that the form which their action took could turn out to be embarrassing to the Executive Committee here and to the work of the Union."²²² And yet as distracting as the Brewster issue became, the daily work of the Union had to go on, with the director concerned about the future of the AUUE.

His letters to Mary reflect a tone of weariness as Nettleton turned his attention to the Maison as his plan for the future of the Union. "Meantime I hope the Trustees are getting busy with their plans. If they had some big contributions to the Maison fund that would be the most practically effective help to the future plans."²²³ He also had his London director Dr. McLean forward cables on the importance of the Union and "this ought to help the campaign for financial endowment. Of course Brewster's attacks may cause some disaffection and trouble, but I don't see how his opinion

²²¹ Ibid, 5 April 1919.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

can stand against the testimony of far better men. . It won't be our fault if they can't convince the colleges and the prospective donors of the importance of putting the Union on a permanent basis."²²⁴ Nettleton had metaphorically thrown up his hands, though he possessed far too much of a sense of duty to stop working to ensure the future of the AUUE. Though he felt blindsided by the Brewster affair and blamed the Trustees for the awkwardness as it dragged out, more changes popped up.

Those changes were a proposed combining of similar organizations so they would not be working at cross purposes, but also might mean the end of the Union as an independent organization. Nettleton had only bits and pieces of information, "We are waiting full news of the meeting of the Trustees...Jim Woods's cable said that the Union was considering consolidation with the "Institutes" (I suppose, the Institute of International Education and the Council (I suppose, the National Council of Education.) I don't know what this may mean, but I suppose they are working out a plan to consolidate American Educational interests abroad."²²⁵ To his credit though, "These new bodies have sprung up without us knowing much about them...to me the main thing is to have the international educational interests combined and strengthened in the best way and without duplication of effort."²²⁶

As more details came out, however Nettleton became less charitable about the two new organizations as he realized they had no experience at this while he had been building the Union from the bottom up during wartime. "We have done all the work abroad and everything is in fine shape, if only the home conflicts can be

²²⁴ Ibid, 11 April 1919.

²²⁵ Ibid, 24 April 1919. Parentheses are as written.

²²⁶ Ibid, 4 May 1919.

straightened out...I should have thought he (Anson)...would have safeguarded Union interests since we were already in the field. We ought to have had the Carnegie money (\$30,000 that had gone to the International Institute of Education) and we ought to have been in the war drive last fall.”²²⁷

The “war drive” referenced the 1918 United War Work Campaign that raised over \$170 million dollars for organizations that served the troops overseas during the period 11-18 November. The “Seven Sisters” united for this campaign and were as diverse as the Young Men’s Christian Association, to the American Library Association, to the Jewish Welfare Board. In many ways a predecessor to the United Way Campaign of today, the seven organizations squabbled over issues “Ranging from the division of funds to the decision to have a single united funding drive...By the conclusion of the campaign, however, these varied groups were able to raise more than enough money, despite their differences, to support American soldiers. No matter their creed, all of these American groups rallied to support ‘the boys over there.’”²²⁸

Nettleton groused in an earlier letter that by Anson and the Trustees not being involved they had missed out on the funds, of which a tiny amount would keep the AUUE in business for the foreseeable future.²²⁹ However, according to a 25 May 2017 email from Dr. Jeanne Petit of Hope College, whose undergraduates set up a website on the UWWC, Nettleton had been mistaken. Professor Petit had not run into the AUUE in her research.

²²⁷ Ibid, 22 May 1919.

²²⁸ “For the Boys Over There,” The 1918 United War Work Campaign, Hope College. Accessed 28 May 2017, <http://unitedwarwork.com>.

²²⁹ Nettleton, *George Nettleton Papers*, 9 January 1919.

“...it was really very limited to groups who had gotten recognition by the War Department's Commission for Training Camp Activities. It is possible they tried to approach the CTCA, but had been rebuffed, as the Commission wanted to keep things limited (and all of the original groups of the campaign, except for the Salvation Army, had started their work in U.S. training camps and only went to Europe later). Nettleton's lamentation is interesting, but there was no chance that the group would have been included in this drive; the War Department thought there were too many groups as it was!”

That was not an avenue that Anson Stokes, the Trustees nor the AUUE had available to them. Nettleton had many skills, but knowledge of and ability at fundraising appeared not to be one of them.

Nevertheless, the fundraising and consolidation of the international education organizations, while bothersome were beyond his control and on the other side of the ocean. The Brewster situation had not gone away and he dealt with it on a daily basis and caused him constant distress. In fact as late as April, Brewster still stirred the pot and tried “to hand in a minority report, on April 18, to our report of March 4, regardless of the fact that he is no longer on the Union staff. He wants it sent to the Presidents of all our member colleges, but it is rather late in the day...since he is now off the staff. He is getting to be simply absurd.”²³⁰

Nettleton still worried about the results of the AUUE Trustees meeting in New York which would be the first since the Brewster manifesto in March. “We shall be keen to hear the results of the meeting of April 19 in New York. Now the thing to do is to get some big subscribers to the endowment fund and that will put an end to this

²³⁰ Ibid, 20 Apr 1919.

Bolshevist movement against the Union.”²³¹ Nettleton hoped “that the plans for the future will be complete before he (Brewster) has a chance to mess things up.”²³²

For Nettleton, the Brewster affair so completely sapped his energy and attention that he even brought it up when he proudly told Mary of his award, along with Van Dyke and Hibbert of the French Legion of Honor. “I suppose to Brewster this will be the final proof of our ‘neglect of war duty’ so as to cultivate friendly relations with the French.”²³³ He remarked however that by being “made ‘Chevaliers of the Legion of Honor’ ...I am immensely pleased for the sake of the Union, for this gives us a most distinct recognition as an organization and should be most helpful in the future.”²³⁴ He also ended the letter, “You can’t imagine what a joy it is not to have him (Brewster) around.”²³⁵

One of the characteristics of Nettleton’s letters to Mary throughout his time in Paris was his writing rarely left any room on the stationary, often running so close to the end that he had to write in tiny characters. They were often six to eight pages long and mailed mostly twice a week. The letters portrayed one of the most complete descriptions of the life and organization of the American University Union during its war years and reflected both the social and working life of the organization. The social to AUUE percentage varied but in the last several weeks of his overseas time, his AUUE descriptions, though sharp and critical became a much smaller

²³¹ Ibid, 20 April 1919.

²³² Ibid, 8 May 1919.

²³³ Ibid, 30 May 1919.

²³⁴ Ibid, 19 June 1919.

²³⁵ Ibid.

percentage of his letters and his ideas for vacation and adventures with Mary and children grew larger.

More than anything else, this was a tired man ready to go home.

Conclusion

Following his return Nettleton's sense of duty did not allow him to completely wash his hands of the organization he had put so much time and effort into. Though at a much smaller and less influential level than he had hoped or expected, Nettleton worked with the Institute of International Education and the American Council on Education who now oversaw the union as it evolved "in cooperation with other organizations, to attract more American college men to France for graduate study, and to serve as an agency for cultivating a better understanding of the United States in England, France, Italy and other European countries."²³⁶ In addition to acting as advisor to the Union, he was chairman of the Finance Committee and was a member of the governing board.

Following his wartime service as head of the AUUE in Paris, he returned to Yale as professor, eventually rising to chairman of the English department from 1921 to 1931 before serving as dean of Yale College from 1937 to 1939. His only extended time away from Yale was in 1922-1923, while he temporarily served as acting president of Vassar College. He also wrote and edited *Yale in the World War* about the universities wartime contribution.²³⁷ George Nettleton died in 1959.²³⁸

President Harry Judson became head of the AUUE in 1921 as the Union struggled not only to find relevance, but to raise money to continue its mission. Chronicled in his letters to other university presidents, donors and Professor

²³⁶ *The American University Union in Europe: 1917-1918*, 7.

²³⁷ George H. Nettleton, *Yale in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925.)

²³⁸ George H. Nettleton, "Guide to the George Henry Nettleton Papers," Yale University Library. Accessed 5 March 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0473>.

Nettleton. Judson's frustration as a supporter during the war and attempts to put the organization on a solid financial footing following the war become apparent.

At the University of Chicago, Judson presided over a period of consolidation and sustained growth for the young institution, as the budget tripled and the student body grew from 5,070 to 12,429 between 1907 and 1923. New buildings for geology, classics, and the general library were constructed. Thanks in part to the personal contacts made by Rebecca Judson, a lavishly decorated center for the University's women students was completed. Judson retired in 1923 and died in 1927.²³⁹

William Tenney Brewster returned to Barnard College where he reassumed his provost post at Barnard College.

Rexford Tugwell went on to become one of the best known of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's so called "Brains Trust" that desperately tried to re-engineer government and change the social environment of society to deal with the depths of the Great Depression.²⁴⁰ Many of his ideas and theories came from watching economies of both the US and Allies respond to the pressure of supplying and fighting World War I.²⁴¹

This combination of factors brought Professor Tugwell to the attention of the President Roosevelt in 1932. Tugwell even went on to appear on the 25 June 1934 *Time* Magazine cover.²⁴² In 1932 Roosevelt appointed Tugwell Assistant Secretary,

²³⁹ "Office of the President, Harry Pratt Judson:1907-1923," University of Chicago. Accessed 3 May 2016, <https://president.uchicago.edu/directory/harry-pratt-judson>.

²⁴⁰ Eliot A. Rosen, Hoover, Roosevelt and the Brains Trust: From Depression to New Deal (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 151-194.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 155, 163-164.

²⁴² Tugwell, *Lesser Heights of Morningside*, xvi-xvii.

then Undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture, and then picked him to head up one of the most controversial New Deal initiatives, the Resettlement Administration.²⁴³ As mentioned in Jane Jacobs book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Tugwell wrote, "My idea is to go just outside centers of population, pick up cheap land, build a whole community and entice people into it. Then go back into the cities and tear down whole slums and make parks of them."²⁴⁴ The effort mostly failed, but some of the "Greenbelt Towns" still exist.

Tugwell went on to various other positions as World War II continued, including the New York Planning Commission and Governor of Puerto Rico, along with President of the territory's public university. Interestingly Leon Keyserling, the writer of the Introduction to Tugwell's autobiography, wrote "If Rex had exerted himself more often with regard to the little niceties in personal relationships, he *might* have accomplished even more than he did."²⁴⁵ George Nettleton would have agreed.

For the five million Doughboys who served stateside and overseas during the Great War, their discharges appeared needlessly abrupt and today seem particularly cruel. The soldiers had no support network nor were steps taken to integrate back into society. The government gave the troops \$60 and a train ticket home.²⁴⁶

In the economic downturn that followed the war most veterans felt they had given up two to four years of their lives for their country, which led to resentment

²⁴³ Purvis, *A Dictionary of American History*, 343.

²⁴⁴ As quoted in Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 2002), 310.

²⁴⁵ Tugwell, *The Lesser Heights of Morningside*, xvi. Italics are Keyserling's.

²⁴⁶ Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War and the Remaking of America*, 161-178.

toward their peers who failed to serve. Veterans organizations such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars pushed for compensation and the “World War Adjusted Compensation Act” passed in 1924. This “Bonus” as it became nicknamed, came due in 1945, which caused grumbling but generally approved of by the veterans. Then the Stock Market crashed in 1929 and the Great Depression took hold in a way that brought this and other grievances bubbling to the surface.²⁴⁷

In the depths of the greatest economic downturn in American history, 1945 seemed a long way off. A crowd of approximately 25,000 marched on the Capitol in 1932 and camped on the Anacostia River promising to stay until their bonus was paid. Eventually Hoover ordered the Army, led by Colonels Douglas McArthur and George Patton, to run out the demonstrators. Troops burned the tents and ran off the veterans, but killed two veterans in a particularly ugly incident. Though it restored order, the dispersal of the Bonus Army was widely credited with the eventual defeat of Herbert Hoover’s reelection bid by the Democratic Candidate Franklin Roosevelt.²⁴⁸ Ironically, Roosevelt won despite insisting on the 1945 pay date, and even vetoed Congress’ act to do so early. Congress however overrode his veto and paid the Bonus in 1936.

Those same veterans, now in political leadership positions as the US entered war again in 1941, began planning for the next World War veterans who would be coming home soon. The Doughboys’ most important work lay ahead of them.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 179-204

The exposure to higher education while the Doughboys deployed overseas and the lack thereof on their return from the Great War would ultimately help lead to World War II's GI Bill. The GI Bill heralded the opening of college education to a much broader swath of society. This government assumed obligation had virtually no precedent across the globe. Suddenly families with no previous history of college graduates became not only encouraged to seek higher education, but doing so was seen as a patriotic obligation.

This sea change in attitude toward the college experience in the 1930s and 40s did not occur in isolation. The Great War veterans had already begun work on what would become the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and though it would have provisions for unemployment benefits along with home and business loans, the most visible benefit had to do with post-secondary education.

As Jennifer Keene wrote, it is "hard to exaggerate the importance of the GI Bill" in American society.²⁴⁹ It was she argued, "the Great War's final legacy to the country," and the engine that fueled and still fuels our economy.²⁵⁰ In order to understand where the properly named "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944" came from we must understand its antecedents like the AUUE that supported educational endeavors during and after the First World War

The veterans of the First World War had had to fight and claw for what they considered their due for their sacrifices, so where did the impetus for governmental support for higher education come from? In many ways it came from the soldiers

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 212.

²⁵⁰ Ibid

themselves, with their new experience of spending time with other Americans from all different classes and areas of the country during the First World War. Before the war the average Doughboy had not travelled much beyond his own small community, rarely out of his state and certainly not out of the country. A tour of Europe had been a privilege reserved exclusively for the rich, but now an Iowa farm boy or Alabama sharecropper had been tourists in a land they had only read about before. As Walter Donaldson wrote in his song made famous immediately after the war, "How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Paree?)"²⁵¹ More to the point, how you gonna keep them down on the farm now that they have been exposed to college and a brighter future?

In addition to acting as cultural tourists and getting to know college men in the trenches and in combat, two programs specifically exposed college to men who may not have had that opportunity. Overseas the AEFU, though short lived, exposed Doughboys to college classes. At no cost to the student and a wide array of classes, soldiers had the chance to try a variety of subjects without an entry exam. Though the rigor of the academics seemed questionable the introduction to higher level courses most likely encouraged further exploration. The other initiative was the Student Army Training Corps held at over 540 schools across the country. Though many of the cadets were already on campus, schools admitted tens of thousands more with the government picking up the tab. Amongst the trials and errors of a more universal approach to a college education during the First World War that led

²⁵¹ Nora Bayes, "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm?" written by Walter Donaldson. Accessed 6 April 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgqVCJpRqWQ>.

to using that education as a benefit for military service from 1944 through today, how did the American University Union fit in?

The Union became heavily involved with connecting college men to schools in France and Britain, along with supporting the AEFU initiative. However since its client group was limited to those either in or graduated from college, it did little to promote broader access to a college education.

The AUUE combined with the International Institute of Education following the war, but retained its name and locations in Paris and London to assist foreign exchanges between the United States and Europe. Though no longer a separate entity, the American University Union continued to limp on into the 1920's until the 1940's, when World War II forced abandonment of their quarters in Paris. With no construction records reporting the proposed Paris headquarters, the Maison des Etudiants had been built, one assumes the land eventually returned to the city. The only possibility is a part of the Cité internationale, Universitaire de Paris which has buildings/dorms which are country specific. There is presently no relationship indicated between the two.

The Union ended up with offices in London and Paris, but had to close the Paris branch in 1942 because it became untenable to continue a presence there under the German dominated Vichy government.²⁵² They moved all operations to

²⁵² International Institute of Education *1942 Annual Report*, IIE Archives. Accessed 16 Jun 2017, <https://p.widenedn.net/jvcq08/1947-IIE-Annual-Report>.

London for the duration of the war, but the International Institute of Education seeing no need for a separate organization ended up quietly closing the doors in 1947.²⁵³

Why did the AUUE go from a vibrant organization hooked into both the expatriate and college man network in the United States to an also-ran among educational organizations that promoted international exchanges? Several issues arose to cause the organization to lose credibility.

Organizationally it had issues that precluded a united front, specifically allowing “Bureaus” for schools that could afford them. Though all schools paid the same dues, if schools (mostly public) did not have the available funds for their own bureau, no matter the level of service by the Union staff, they more than likely felt like second class citizens. Because of this, when the war ended, the public schools became the first colleges to stop paying dues. Also the Union staff themselves seemed to be perceived by the moneyed schools as mere caretakers for the building, rather than part of a united organization. This makes sense if you saw say Harvard or Columbia with a suite of offices the same size as that for entire Union staff.

Timing for finances was another reason for the AUUE struggles post-war. Though the Union had an idea of the direction they wanted to go post-war with their organization evolving past the “Club” for the military college man, their attempts to secure funding came after the Armistice, not when war excitement opened wallets. Nettleton’s business practice of guaranteeing two-thirds of the hotel rooms and restaurant instead of renting them allowed the organization to lower expenses to just

²⁵³ Ibid, 1947 *Annual Report*.

office spaces, and staff expenses. Nettleton even commented that he would be below his budget during the first year. During the war, fundraising had been much easier but expenses were lower, while after the war raising money was no longer “patriotic” and easy to come by while expenses went up exponentially.

The major reason for that expense spike turned out to be the Maison des Etudiants. Nettleton warned that this could be one of the most difficult items for the Trustees, and in a post war economy this turned out to be true. The land was a gift but the building costs were going to run in the neighborhood of \$500,000 and in the 1920s that was a significant amount of money.²⁵⁴ Unless a wealthy benefactor stepped up, that became impossible and though there is no record of it, my assumption is they gave the land back to the city of Paris.

The personalities within the organization also factored in. The time and timing drain on Nettleton of dealing with Tugwell and Brewster had an outsize impact because of the small staff size. We only hear the director’s side of the story, but based on the remarks by others in the AUUE, though not evil, both were very bad fits for the Union and the Union paid for it in efficiency and planning.

Finally the timing of both the director’s vacation and the war’s end hurt operating efficiency. Nettleton’s hesitation and worry that the organization lacked strength for him to take time off during the war turned out to be correct. His new staff simply could not function well with the limited amount of training they had before he headed back to the states. In hindsight, much of the issue may have been the pot stirring of William Brewster who appeared to be supporting the Union and

²⁵⁴ *The American University Union in Europe: 1917-1918*, 29.

director even as he undercut it. Would Tugwell and Brewster have had such an outsized impact if Nettleton had stayed in Paris instead of going home for a month? An unanswerable question of course, but one that bears contemplation.

Finally the war's sudden end which surprised almost everyone. The Union had continued growing when the war ended and that meant a reset for post war activities along with an urge to get home. This was not just an AUUE issue but also an issue that almost all support organizations had. Some were large and financially stable enough to weather the storm and plan for relevant futures. With its decentralized organization, bad timing, personnel issues, and failure to adapt the American University Union simply was not.

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