

THE QUAD MUST BE MADE SAFE: WILLISTON ACADEMY
STUDENTS IN WORLD WAR ONE

James Egelhofer

Today, Wilson's War Message of 1917 sounds like the distant call of an outdated patriotism: "The world must be made safe for democracy." However, according to many social histories, this message in its time affected the country extraordinarily and almost universally, and Americans responded to the call with widespread enthusiastic vigor.¹ How can it be that there were so few questioners, so few protesters, so few dissenters among characteristically argumentative Americans? In the history of American politics, students are the most common, and often most loud, source of the dissent that is starkly absent from the war years of the 1910s. What were students doing during those years?

Williston Academy, a private secondary school for boys in Easthampton, Massachusetts, reflected the positive attitudes and interests of the country during that time period. In the pre-war years 1911 to 1914, enrollment was strong, hovering at around 200 after a period of significant growth.² Under Principal Joseph Henry Sawyer, the school was having more financial success than ever before, and had paid off half of a debt that still amounted to almost twice the operating budget of the school.³ Students were

James Egelhofer is at Brown University. He was a Senior at the Williston Northampton School in Easthampton, Massachusetts, when he wrote this paper for Allison Marsland's AP U.S. History course in 1999.

certainly politically involved. There were two large, rigorous debating societies, the rival Adelphi and Gamma Sigma. Senior Theses reflected an awareness of the world. However, instead of protesting and dissenting, students originally viewed the war with disconnected scholarly, often scientific, interest and some ambivalence, then slowly slid with increasing enthusiasm into the mold of patriotism that is associated with the First World War.

In the first years of the twentieth century, the years leading up to World War I, the United States often concerned itself with the affairs of the rest of the world. The end of the nineteenth century was fraught with conflicts both military and diplomatic: the annexing of Hawaii, the fight with the British over Venezuela, the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War, and the fight for the Open Door in China. In these and all of the world issues of the time, the United States viewed itself as the sovereign power and sought the status of world leader. Roosevelt voiced his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, giving the United States the responsibility of policing the Hemisphere. The Open Door notes asserted that the United States had the right to protect its own interests anywhere in the world.

As the government swelled with self-respect and self-righteousness, the population began to feel the effects of being a world power as well. Pride in America flourished as America grew. In 1914, the United States was as rich as Britain and Germany combined, and three times as rich as France.⁴ And, perhaps more importantly, the populace knew it. According to a children's song of the time, "Of all the mighty nations, from the east unto the west, the glorious Yankee nation is the greatest and the best."⁵ Political interests became one of the primary concerns of the people, and patriotic spirit and devotion were foremost in that concern.

At Williston, despite the fact that in the school paper, *The Willistonian*, every headline from 1913-1920 was about sports, political awareness was very high. In the early 1910s, both of the debating societies at Williston, Adelphi and Gamma Sigma, had large memberships and held weekly debates. The topics of these debates were almost always relevant to the issues we associate with

that period today. When there was a low turnout at a meeting, they would discuss some school-related topic like whether debating should be compulsory or whether the student council was working for the best interests of the school. However, when attendance was high, which it almost always was, the societies would debate a political or social issue relevant to the day. In the years before the war, topics included immigration, unions, treatment of Indians, labor laws, Jim Crow laws, and government ownership of railroads. Many topics also demonstrated the United States' feeling of superiority and expressed the idea of manifest destiny: control of the Philippines, conflict with Japan, and even notions that the United States should annex Mexico and Canada (both of those decisions were awarded to the negative).⁶ These meetings were supplemented by frequent lectures on topics of interest. Students were indeed interested and active, both within the school and in the context of world politics.

Although America and Williston were both growing in the early 1910s, Europe was in trouble. Huge trade competition and the formation of two separate alliance powers set Europe up for a huge falling out. In June 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian. Austria-Hungary looked to Germany, Serbia looked to Russia, Russia looked to France, and Germany declared war on Russia and France on August 1, 1914. Britain temporarily held out, but declared war when Germany cut through neutral Belgium on August 4. Europe was in pieces.

Historian Mary Beth Norton describes the reaction of Americans to the war as shock: "The outbreak of the Great War in Europe at first stunned Americans... 'Civilization is all gone, and barbarism come,' moaned one social reformer."⁷ Williston students reacted not nearly so severely. Originally, they viewed the war in Europe as just that: a faraway event, deserving of interest just as the Philippines or Mexico were. The school community recognized the war as a huge political event, and were conscious of the delicate balance that resulted from a war of such magnitude, but treated it with the same spirit that they had applied to all of the

political events of recent years, perhaps because of the feeling of superiority and isolation that affected the United States at that time.

In the fall of 1914, although the war had started just over a month before, the school showed no signs of the shock that Norton describes as a reaction to the war. There had been a ten percent decline in enrollment from 198 in 1913-1914 to 178 in 1914-1915,⁸ but Dr. Sawyer and the Board of Trustees were not worried. The Trustee minutes did not acknowledge the drop, and although the school still faced a debt that was as great as the operating budget, the Board was forming plans to build another dorm. There was no mention at all of the war that was at that point devouring Europe.⁹ It was clearly not an issue at Williston. One senior from the graduating class of 1914 had written a Thesis entitled "If the United States Should Be Drawn into War," but it was purely theoretical, speaking in technical terms about the ability of the United States Army to mobilize, and discussing the use of technology: "The automobile and aeroplane are likely to be used to a considerable extent," but "the idea that it [the airplane] could be used to advantage in dropping dynamite and other high explosives is declared by Army men to be false."¹⁰ Thus, the writer, William Robert Jennings, was eerily prophetic to some degree. Among school documents, the first mention of the actual war came shortly after the 1914-1915 school year was under way, in the September 30, 1914 *Willistonian*, which covered a debate of the Adelphi society about whether the "current European War" was a result of racial hatred. Clearly the war was common knowledge, but only as common as the usual debate topics,¹¹ which continued to dominate the societies throughout the 1914 school year. The week after the "European War" debate, the Adelphi society debated the merits of women's suffrage. The debating societies remained active throughout the year 1914, but no extra attention was given to the not-yet-Great War. In fact, there was not a single debate about the war in the remaining months of 1914. Although there were weekly lectures, none of them was about the war. The other Senior Theses from that year, besides Jennings' essay on the United States Army, demonstrated strong world interest as well as

scientific curiosity. Topics included Woodrow Wilson, immigration, and the Panama Canal, along with cinematography, electric traction, diesel engines, and photographs.¹² The one debate about the war from September to December shows a consciousness but not a tremendous interest among the Williston community. The war attracted about the same amount of academic attention as did the Philippines: often debated, sometimes written about, not given much personal attention. Williston students still viewed the war in a scholarly light and were personally ambivalent—the patriotic wave had not yet formed. No one, as far as the records show, left to enlist in Canada; at least, not yet.

As students returned from winter break to face 1915, interest in the war increased. Perhaps it was the inclusion of American shipping vessels in hostility, or simply the general growth of the war in Europe. Either way, the war suddenly became a presence at Williston. From the beginning of 1915 to the end of the school year in June, there were three debates over whether it would be best to substantially increase the Army and Navy of the United States—two of the three decisions were awarded to the affirmative. After the *Lusitania* was sunk in May, the Adelphi society debated whether Germany was justified in sinking the boat, with the decision naturally going to the negative. After debating the war once during the entire first half of the year, the societies in combination debated elements of it seven times in the second half of the year.¹³

The growing curiosity of the seniors was also evident in the Senior Theses. However, unlike later in the war, the papers of the class of 1915 about the war did not overflow with patriotic spirit. Instead, they represented a certain academic but detached attitude towards the war. In 1915, thirteen of the twenty-five papers focused on the war, which makes up by far the greatest portion for any one topic during that year.¹⁴ Two of the thirteen were political research papers: “The War of the Seven Nations” by Harold C. Byram, and “Why Do the Nations Fight?” by John C. Canaran. Byram’s paper represented the extremely small number of papers that looked at the war questioningly, with an almost cynical view.

Byram first described what he correctly predicted would be the magnitude of the war: "The Napoleonic Wars will seem like dwarfs in comparison."¹⁵ However, the most unusual attitude that Byram expressed was thus: "We only know, no matter who the victor, that precious lives and precious blood are wasted that some king might be more powerful." It is to be noted that this was far before United States entry, and the fact that he mentions the uselessness of the war in terms of a "king" suggests that he might speak differently if democracy were involved. Evidence does not show that Byram was any sort of outcast at Williston. He played three varsity sports, and although he was voted "Thinks he is handsomest" and "Thinks he is the best athlete" without being "handsomest" or "best athlete," he participated in school activities and apparently was not at all shunned by his classmates as a pacifist extremist.¹⁶ Nonetheless, this is a very unusual attitude to be represented among school papers. Although throughout the war students would attest to the appalling nature of war, no other would question the purpose of the war in such a way.

The other political research paper of 1915, "Why Do the Nations Fight?" by John M. Canaran, pinned the causes of the war to some extent on trade competition, but more on ethnic relations: "The world has at last realized that the political boundaries of Eastern Europe cut across older and more persistent divisions of race, language, and religion and thus bring nations into conflict."¹⁷ He viewed the war with the same detachment as the Adelphi society and the rest of the Williston community at this time.

Three of the war papers in 1915 dealt again with technological aspects of the war: two entitled "New Methods in War," and one called "War and Waste." The two about "new methods in war" dealt primarily with the idea of trench warfare, while "War and Waste" was about how the armies managed to be efficient enough to fight the war. These kinds of papers, which were frequent throughout the war, display another kind of academic interest, not political but scientific.

Two war papers of 1915 stand out as forerunners of the attitudes to come, both entitled “The Effect of the War Upon the United States,” with both strongly defending the United States as a victim of the barbaric European nations, especially Germany. The first asserts, “Although in this war the United States is innocent, she has already paid a heavy toll, which will increase as time goes on.”¹⁸ The other claims, “The warring nations have forced the United States into it.”¹⁹ It was early yet, but students already were lining up behind the cause of the United States. A number of the other papers that dealt with the war primarily concerned President Wilson, and these too represent an unflinching good opinion and trust in the United States; Wilson was often identified as the second best President ever, after only Abraham Lincoln.²⁰ There was amazing trust in Wilson. In fact, only one society debate in these years centrally questioned an action of Wilson: a joint debate in 1915 at which the question was “Resolved: that President Wilson committed a blunder in vetoing the immigration bill, H.R. 6060.” The decision was awarded to the negative.

By the spring of 1915 there had been yet another drop in enrollment from 178 to 161,²¹ and the Board of Trustees in a meeting on April 24, 1915, having looked at the enrollment for the coming year, finally noted the drop but did not attribute it to the still-distant war, deciding instead that “the only known cause for this was the adverse business conditions prevailing in the country.”²² There was still no mention of the war, or any indication that the “adverse business conditions” may have been a result of the war. Throughout the war years, the Board of Trustees consistently avoided attributing unusual school difficulties to the war, this being an obvious example. Thus, neither school officials nor students took much interest in the war in the spring of 1915. The sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 seemed to have little immediate effect on the students packing up for their summer vacation, except for the one debate noted above. However, as students returned to school in the fall of 1915, they experienced the same boost in interest as in the fall and winter of 1914, but to a far greater degree. It took students the duration of summer vacation to react to the war events of spring 1915, but when they finally did react,

they did so with increased vigor. If the fall of 1914 saw the war become a presence at Williston, the fall of 1915 saw it become a focal point in both the lives and the studies of the whole school. The *Lusitania* and other similar incidents must have been on students' minds, because there was suddenly a huge increase in the kind of attitude expressed in the 1915 Theses that the United States as a neutral nation was being unfairly and illegally violated. At the first Adelphi meeting of the year, reported in the September 25, 1915 *Willistonian*, members debated the question "Resolved, that President Wilson's Peace policies are for the best interests of the country." They debated the merits of the neutrality methods of Wilson, and the decision was awarded soundly to the affirmative. Aside from that debate, there was no documented discussion about whether Wilson and the United States were doing the right thing.

During the second half of the school year, the students' defense of the policies of the United States became even more apparent. The Senior Theses of 1916 displayed what seems like almost a planned attack on Germany and defense of United States "neutral rights." Thirteen of the twenty-five papers that year dealt primarily with the war, and five of those thirteen dealt exclusively with neutral rights. The writers of these papers both defended the rights of neutral nations as a whole, sympathizing especially with Belgium,²³ and unquestioningly backed the claims and causes of the United States. Joseph L. Brady wrote a paper called "The Duty of a Neutral Nation," in which he stated that the warring nations had "violated the confidence which the neutral nations placed on them."²⁴ He also stated that the United States bore the responsibility of looking out for every uninvolved country: "The anxiety and welfare of all the other neutral nations depend to a large extent on the actions of this country." He, like the writers of other papers in 1916, used the sinking of the *Lusitania* as an example of a barbarous violation of the rights of the United States, calling the act "pure cold-blooded murder." He stated that Germany had "torpedoed defenseless merchant vessels," "Germany has broken a state law, and should therefore be punished," and the United States' "duty is to care for the weak nation and to force Germany

to put a stop to these savage methods and make reparation to the offended nation.” This attitude is clearly a manifestation of the idea that the United States was the destined and rightful sovereign of the world, and must defend the good of the rest of humanity. A remarkably similar paper was written by William L. Conway called “The Duty of a Neutral Nation.” E.W. Connor wrote a paper called “The *Lusitania* Case” in which he stated, “This act was not justified according to international law.” He also was willing to stand firmly behind the United States defense of the *Lusitania*, refusing to acknowledge that there may indeed have been contraband aboard, saying, “These statements [Germany’s accusations] are untrue.”²⁵ Yet another writer, Kenneth P. Keefe, wrote a fiery paper by the same name, in which he calls America to attention:

The American government should repudiate Germany for the way in which she has been sinking merchant vessels upon the high seas without warning or even regard for the safety of the passengers. If she then continued to disregard these laws, immediately all intercourse between Germany and America should cease...Every American should be ready to aid the United States in protecting its citizens, to maintain justice, and to preserve the foundations of its institutions.²⁶

Not only did students stand strongly behind Wilson and his neutrality, they were ready to defend it with vigor and almost with blindness.

The 1915-1916 school year also saw an increase in the discussion of a notion that had been present since the beginning of the war: American preparedness. Two of the most popular debate topics over this seven-year span were military training and Army or Navy increases. As the 1915 school year began, these topics became remarkably frequent. In October 1915, the Adelphi debated the question “Resolved: that every male adult should be required to do two years of military service.” In the heated discussion that followed, the principles that surrounded the war became apparent. The affirmative argued that war was “inevitable” and thus the United States should be ready, while the negative argued that such militancy would be the death blow to democracy and would prove the Prussianization of the world. The decision was awarded to the affirmative.²⁷ Two weeks later, Gamma Sigma

debated the question “Resolved: that the best interests of the United States demand an immediate and substantial increase in the Army and Navy.” These questions appeared many times between the outbreak of the war and the entry of the United States, and on October 10, 1915, like almost all other times, the decision was awarded to the affirmative.²⁸

The issue of preparedness appeared in the Senior Theses as well. Two papers called “National Defense” called in ardent terms for military readiness: “The American people are failing to follow reason and to take military precaution because of an old-fashioned idea that such precaution might be misused.”²⁹ The other “National Defense” paper was similarly aggressive: “Let us hope...that steps will be taken to render our coasts safe from invasion.”³⁰ Yet another paper entitled “National Defense” was slightly less fiery and thus perhaps more representative: “I am not defending war. It is hateful and horrible in every aspect... One side has always been wrong, and oftentimes both. But sometimes one side has been right, and if it had refused to fight, it would have committed a fatal crime against all the generations yet unborn.”³¹ The quota of scientifically and scholarly directed war papers was also filled in 1916, with papers called “The Aeroplane in Warfare,” “The Submarine in Warfare,” “War and the Interests of Labor,” and “Business and the War.”

In his memoir of his own tenure as Headmaster (1919-1949), Joseph Henry Sawyer’s successor Archibald Galbraith made note of the beginning of the school year in the fall of 1916, remarking that only 176 out of an expected 190 enrolled.³² The Catalogue shows even fewer—an enrollment of only 160, perhaps accounting for the students who would enlist later in the school year.³³ Only 130 remained by graduation.³⁴ It is hard to say exactly what the school was feeling during these eight months before the United States officially declared war in April 1917, because there seemed to be a sudden lull in war interest. The Trustees continued to build new buildings without so much as mentioning the war in their meetings.³⁵ The debating societies continued debating, but war questions arose with much less frequency in the months

leading up to United States entry—none during the first half of the year, and only four in the weeks between winter break and the declaration of war. A long article appeared in the October 1916 *Bulletin* which showed that Williston was still ready to support the war: faculty member Robert Pellissier had been killed at the Somme, and he gained a huge amount of praise in that *Bulletin*. But among other documents, the war does not appear. Perhaps students and teachers began to sense it coming, or perhaps they thought it was going away. At any rate, documented interest in the war went down before it promptly shot up upon United States entry.

The first Adelphi society debate after the official United States declaration of war dealt with the question “Resolved: that Wilson is our greatest president,”³⁶ once again proving the willingness to support Wilson without question even through a declaration of war. The next week after the debate in praise of Wilson, both Adelphi and Gamma Sigma held open debates about conscription. That very same week, the headline “Four Williston Students Enlist” appeared in *The Willistonian*, briefly detailing the departure of Gardner Penniman, Russell Penniman, Paul Jones, and Edward White.³⁷ From that point on, the presence of the war in *The Willistonian* grew from the most popular debate topic of the societies to a rival even of the hallowed football and baseball teams as a point of interest for the community. Every issue from May 2, 1917 to May 7, 1919 carried information on the war, from editorials about enlisting, to lists of Williston participants, to letters from the front, to death notices. Meanwhile, Headmaster Galbraith described a decline in income and morale due to the “frequent leaving of older students to enlist in the armed forces.”³⁸ In a way that perhaps cannot be understood completely today, the war ruled Williston.

The Willistonian meticulously documented the topic of students and alumni enlisting and serving throughout the war. That issue certainly affected Williston students strongly. The idea that it was one’s duty to enlist caused many students to volunteer; many more were called to service during the draft, starting in June

1917. A week after the first students left to enlist, *The Willistonian* ran an editorial encouraging students to stay at Williston rather than run off to join up. However, the reasoning was not as pacifist as one might suspect—the writer argued that the country needed educated men to become officers instead of enlisting as privates. In the same issue, there was a joint debate over the question “Resolved: that the ideals of American democracy would be greatly endangered by selective conscription.” The decision, predictably, went to the negative.³⁹ Clearly, even among those who were not leaving to join the war, there was little questioning of each person’s duty to participate.

Nonetheless, the appeal of waiting to become an officer and the impending draft did not keep many students from leaving school to enlist anyway, or even more universally, preparing to do so. Although in May 1917 military training had not been officially instituted at Williston, *The Willistonian* reported dorms drilling on the quad and engaging in mock battles in the afternoons. Sports events were cancelled in favor of military training.⁴⁰ And the number of students leaving continued to grow. The May 23 *Willistonian* ran a feature about Williston Patriotism, including statistics from the Civil War: 386 students and six faculty members fought, 49 died. As if to post a challenge, the feature gave the numbers from the current war as well—to that point, according to the feature, nine students had enlisted: four in the Engineer Corps, and five in the Naval Coast Reserve. There was another notice in the issue that four more students had enlisted, three seniors and a junior. A letter from a student, one of the Penniman brothers noted above, who had already enlisted and was at a barracks in Washington, D.C., began a long-running pattern of *Willistonian* publication of military letters from abroad.⁴¹

The end of the 1917 school year saw a shift in the war interest from distant research to hands-on participation. Instead of writing about the war, students drilled with broomsticks in front of their dorms all afternoon, prepared soldiers’ kits to send to Williston war participants, and wrote about such subjects as artificial refrigeration whenever they had some spare time. Only eight

of the 26 Theses were about the war, two were about artificial refrigeration, and none dealt in the least with American involvement. Although the war would return to the Senior Theses with even greater emphasis, 1917 saw a lapse in focus on the war, perhaps due to the sudden closeness of the war as of April, probably as students were just beginning to write their Theses.

The school opening of September 1917 was entirely caught up in the war. Enrollment for that year was 170, but *The Willistonian* reported only 140 students at the school.⁴² *The Willistonian* also published that 70 students and alumni were involved in the war effort. Even more notably, the beginning of that school year saw the institution of official military training for a half an hour a day, under the guidance of a wounded former Canadian officer who was listed as a faculty member in the yearbook. Service figures reflect the eagerness of students. Eight students had been lost to the draft over the summer. Nationwide, three million men evaded draft registration while about 24 million registered, which means that about 13% dodged the draft. Meanwhile, 338,000 of the 3,764,000 men who were drafted failed to show up for induction, about 9%.⁴³ Fewer than a million people volunteered for military service nationwide. At Williston, gathering such numbers for that time period is impossible because no draft-dodging was recorded. However, by the end of 1918, 21 out of the 83 members of the class of 1918 had enlisted, or 25%, while only 3 were drafted.⁴⁴ Thus, Williston students volunteered at a higher rate than the national average: 29% of students serving as opposed to less than 25% nationally.

Williston students demonstrated their eagerness constantly during that school year. The Glee Club performed a minstrel show called "A Night in Camp," in which they recreated Army entertainment in a YMCA hut in France. The yearbook included a huge section called "Members of the Class of 1917 in the Service." In addition, many students actually left school during that year. In its October 3 issue, *The Willistonian* published a list of Williston participants in the war to that point: ten from the Class of '17, ten from the Class of '18, four from the Class of '19, and 45 alumni. In

early November, a teacher, Professor John Doane Churchill, was drafted. In mid-November, an editorial in opposition to the previously mentioned caution against enlistment was published, which urged students to prepare for service. Two more students enlisted soon thereafter. *The Willistonian* also published the first of many death notices, praising the service of Malcom Gifford Jr. '15, who died in France. By the end of the first half of the school year, everyone was immersed in the war, both those who actually left and those who stayed behind.

The second half of the school year saw yet more war activity. The first issue of *The Willistonian* after winter break published a letter from Paul D. Jones, one of the first four students to enlist, who was fighting in France. *The Willistonian* published more than twenty such letters over the course of the war, and they provided perhaps the broadest range of responses to the war from any one group. Their writers ranged from those disillusioned, shell-shocked, and on the verge of total breakdown from the horror, to those flowing with patriotic spirit to the point of not even noticing the carnage. This mix of attitudes is not entirely unusual—most students were willing to admit the horror of war,⁴⁵ but very few were willing to suggest that the war was unnecessary or that they did not want to help the cause. For the most part, the letters reveal the same basic principle. Some writers were more affected by the horror than others, but none questioned the worth of fighting. In mid-January, five more students enlisted and one more was drafted, and the January 30, 1918 *Willistonian* reported only about 140 students at Williston.⁴⁶ In April, another teacher was drafted. In May, *The Willistonian* published an editorial from the Board of Education suggesting that students stay in school. However, in that same issue there was another editorial calling students to war.⁴⁷

The Senior Theses of 1918 reflect the kind of participation in the war that led to so many students leaving. However, unlike in 1917 when students did not write about the war, in 1918, 18 out of the 24 papers were focused on the war. There was a remarkable abundance of patriotic sentiment expressed in these papers, of which the following are just a sample:

America desires neither conquest nor compensation, and tends only to help toward a victory of the cause of law and liberty, to make the world safe for democracy.⁴⁸

Little by little, all of us are realizing that this war is our national business, and every citizen must take some part in it.⁴⁹

Military training in school should be required in order to secure the safety of the nation.⁵⁰

Therefore, let us all unite with President Wilson in saying that, ‘...this menace of combined intrigue and force which we now see so clearly as the German power, a thing without conscience or honor, or capacity for covenanted peace, must be crushed...’⁵¹

One of the papers, entitled “American Colleges and the War,” suggests a similar patriotism among college students: Yale lost half of its undergraduates to the war, Cornell over a thousand; western colleges had similar numbers, midwestern colleges slightly fewer losses.⁵² In a meeting of the Board of Trustees on March 16, 1918, the war was mentioned for the very first time by that group, when Dr. Sawyer presented his principal’s report. He noted that “it has been a time of unrest and indecision and debate,” that there was “much less interest in school activities,” that the “general scholarship record has fallen five to ten points,” and that students seemed “distracted.”⁵³ It is truly a testament to the war efforts of the students during this time that they made even the Trustees notice their diversion from normal school activities. Although it is true that almost all of the documented opinions within Williston support the war with scholarship and vigor, it is also very true that any dissenters were smart to have kept their mouths shut. The Espionage and Sedition Acts signed by Wilson in 1917 and 1918 show the lack of tolerance that met those who spoke out against the government in wartime—these laws gave the government official power to silence anyone who used “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive” language directed at the government, flag, Constitution, or military uniform. In other words, as Mary Beth Norton writes, they “gave the government wide latitude to crack down on those with whom it differed.” She also states that beyond the two thousand people who were actually prosecuted under these laws, “many others were intimidated into silence.” School boards even got into the act, “dismissing teachers who questioned

the war.”⁵⁴ Although Williston was an independent school, it is hard to imagine that many of the same attitudes were not present on campus during those years, forcing those who might have tempered the patriotic wave into silence. As a result, that patriotic wave of support was truly astounding, showing that Williston students in 1917-1919 were just as active as students in 1965-1970; they simply supported another point of view.

The school year opened in the fall of 1918 with only 125 students,⁵⁵ and for the first time in the whole war effort, the Williston community seemed slightly weary of the war. Unlike the fall of 1917, there were no *Willistonian* features about Williston patriotism. The interest was still there: there were continued letters from the front, and rosters of students in the service, but there were no more documented student enlistings, and the withdrawal of German troops earned the first news-related headline in any *Willistonian*, from the beginning of the decade. In the same issue, there was a statistic counting 275 “Williston boys”—students and alumni—in the war.⁵⁶ The Paris Peace came over winter break with little school fanfare.

Through the second half of the year, the Adelphi and Gamma Sigma societies continued to debate war-related topics, especially the League of Nations plan and the reconstruction of Europe. Military training was debated repeatedly.⁵⁷ Alumni notes about war participants in *The Willistonian* ceased in February, and in April, *The Willistonian* published its final count: 359 in the service, 17 dead.⁵⁸ Later, Galbraith would publish his own count: over 400 in the service, 20 of whom gave their lives.⁵⁹ A monument to those who died was created in 1919, and exists in Memorial Hall to this day. But otherwise there was little ceremony surrounding the end of the war. The Senior Theses of 1919 still focused heavily on the war—16 out of the 20 papers—but all were retrospective, although with the same patriotic spirit: “Therefore let this war be the bond that will more closely unite us with our Allies. And now that peace has come let us give thanks to God for having placed at the crisis of our nation such worthy legislators and statesmen and such men as General Pershing and Woodrow Wilson.”⁶⁰ However,

the weariness was also more present than it had been—many of the debates over the merits of military training were decided for the negative, and one Senior Thesis stated:

After a year of typical military training at Peekskill Military Academy, I am fully convinced that military drill is not only wasteful but harmful to boys under military age, and altogether a poor substitute for a scientifically devised plan of gymnastics and wholesome sports...Let our schools keep to their tasks and let the young men learn the art of a soldier where it can be better taught than in a preparatory school.⁶¹

Although the writer did not question the values and ideals behind the war, he did express weariness with the war effort. Scholarly interest in the war, although mostly of patriotic nature, continued in the next few years, 25 out of the 43 papers in 1920, 8 out of the 40 in 1921.

The status of the school improved greatly in the years after the war. The 125-person student body grew, and the school's finances improved under Archibald Galbraith. There was not, at least in the years immediately following the war, any kind of pacifist backlash or change in attitude among students; in fact, a number of students came back to Williston after their time in the service. Some gave lectures, some visited, a few even re-enrolled and finished,⁶² all with positive attention. A good deal of praise was also given to those who gave their lives. The memorial was created, and *The Bulletin* published biographies of a number of the soldiers while *The Willistonian* did likewise. As the school entered the 1920s, it grew but did not recoil from the patriotism that had ruled it. It seems unlikely that any war effort of the future could ever match this one. Students have always been and are likely to remain activists, but what was interesting about Williston students in World War I was that they expressed their activism with one voice, behind the cause of the nation—perhaps stifling the voice of the dissenters, perhaps accepting the ideals proclaimed by the United States without question, but nonetheless supporting the cause with enthusiasm and scholarship.

They did not register against their will or create a disturbance or a riot as some thought they would but they registered with enthusiasm. That was the true American spirit.⁶³

¹ See Farwell, Over There, [no publisher, no date] pp. 35-41; and Rice/Krout, United States History from 1865, pp. 170-171

² The Annual Catalogue of Williston Seminary, 1911-1914 (hereafter "Catalogue")

³ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1841-1918 (hereafter "Trustees") The Williston Northampton School Archives

⁴ Meirion and Susie Harries, The Last Days of Innocence (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) p. 13

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18

⁶ The Willistonian v. 94-100 (hereafter "TW"). For a larger sampling of topics, see note 11.

⁷ Mary Beth Norton, ed., A People and A Nation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996) p. 439

⁸ Catalogue 1913-1914

⁹ Trustees (Meeting May 2, 1914)

¹⁰ William Robert Jennings, "If The United States Should Be Drawn into War" (Unpublished essay, 1914 ts.) Williston Senior Theses (Hereafter, theses will be cited with author, title, ST and date; all other information remains consistent)

¹¹ The most popular debate topics in the years here dealt with were as follows, in no particular order: immigration restriction, United States relations with Mexico, railroad ownership and control (especially whether the government should own and control railroads), women's suffrage, prohibition, and President Wilson; and as the war came closer to home: military training and increases in the Army and Navy.

¹² ST 1914

¹³ TW v. 102-103 (January 13, 1915–June 2, 1915)

¹⁴ ST 1915

¹⁵ Harold C. Byram, "The War of the Seven Nations," ST 1915

¹⁶ Catalogue 1915

¹⁷ John M. Canaran, "Why Do the Nations Fight," ST 1915

¹⁸ Charles William Chittim, "The Effect of the War Upon the United States," ST 1915

¹⁹ Leander Glynn Teaton, "The Effect of the War Upon the United States," ST 1915

²⁰ This attitude is expressed in Malcolm Gifford Jr.'s Thesis of 1915, as well as in numerous Adelpi and Gamma Sigma debates through the years 1913-1919; most notably Nov. 18, 1916, Jan. 17, 1917, April 25, 1917, and Jan. 15, 1919

²¹ Catalogue 1915-1916. It may also be of interest that all of

the yearbooks during the war years (1914-1919) were published with cheap paper binding as opposed to the hardcover binding that was previously and subsequently used, perhaps due to school finances.

²² Trustees 1841-1918 (Meeting April 24, 1915)

²³ A number of Theses were written about the exploitation of the neutral Belgians, including “How Belgium Saved Europe” by Grant D. Morse in 1916

²⁴ Joseph L. Brady, “The Duty of a Neutral Nation,” ST 1916

²⁵ E.W. Connor, “The *Lusitania* Case,” ST 1916

²⁶ Kenneth B. Keefe, “The *Lusitania* Case,” ST 1916

²⁷ TW v. 104 (Oct. 6, 1915) p. 2

²⁸ TW v. 104 (Oct. 20, 1915) p. 4. See also: Jan. 27, 1915, March, 19, 1915, March 1, 1916, April 19, 1916, May 3, 1916

²⁹ W.J. Donovan, “National Defense,” ST 1916

³⁰ Daniel L. Friel, “National Defense,” ST 1916

³¹ Andrew B. Mangum, “National Defense,” ST 1916

³² Archibald Galbraith, The Galbraith Years (Easthampton, MA: Williston Academy, 1967) p. 7

³³ Catalogue 1916-1917

³⁴ Galbraith, p. 7

³⁵ Trustees 1841-1918

³⁶ TW v. 108 (April 25, 1917) p. 1

³⁷ TW v. 108 (May 2, 1917) p. 4

³⁸ Galbraith, p. 8

³⁹ TW v. 108 (May 9, 1917) p. 1

⁴⁰ TW v. 108 (May 9, 1917) p. 2

⁴¹ TW v. 108 (May 23, 1917) pp. 2-3

⁴² TW v. 110 (January 30, 1918) p. 4

⁴³ Norton, p. 445

⁴⁴ TW v. 109-111 (September 26, 1917—October 9, 1918)

⁴⁵ This comes out especially in Senior Theses; see Andrew B. Mangum’s “National Defense” above

⁴⁶ TW v. 110 (January 30, 1918) p. 4

⁴⁷ TW v. 111 (May 18, 1918) p. 2

⁴⁸ George Samuel Bacon, “America’s Part in the Great War,” ST 1918

⁴⁹ Leroy Elwyn Crane, “The War Work of the YMCA,” ST 1918

⁵⁰ Elliot Gordon, “Military Training for School Students,” ST 1918

⁵¹ Joseph Moynahan, “America’s Case Against Germany,” ST 1918

- ⁵² Maurice T. Kennedy, "American Colleges and the War," ST 1918
- ⁵³ Trustees 1841-1918 (Meeting March 16, 1918)
- ⁵⁴ Norton, p. 449
- ⁵⁵ TW v. 112 (September 25, 1918) p. 2
- ⁵⁶ TW v. 112 (October 16, 1918) p. 1
- ⁵⁷ TW v. 113 (January 29, 1919, February 5, 1919)
- ⁵⁸ TW v. 114 (April 23, 1919) p. 1
- ⁵⁹ Galbraith, p. 9
- ⁶⁰ Harold Lincoln Barnett, "America's First Year in the Great War," ST 1919
- ⁶¹ Wilfrid M. Kimball, "Military Training for Boys Under Military Age," ST 1919
- ⁶² Catalogue 1920
- ⁶³ Barnett, ST 1919

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[via the Internet]

Subject: **Asia Mirror for The Concord Review**
Date: Tue, 07 Oct 1997 13:02:13 +0000
From: "Ng Song Beng, MirrorS" <ngsb@mirrors.org.sg>
Organization: MirrorS, Schools Online
To: fitzhugh@tcr.org

Dear Sir

My name is NG SONG BENG. I am the Project Leader for MirrorS, a project funded by the **Singapore National Computer Board** to mirror educational resources on the Internet. The objective is to make access to the Internet resources faster for the education community in Singapore/Asia.

We would like to ask your permission to create an Asia mirror of *The Concord Review* at <http://www.tcr.org>.

We are very impressed with your effort in this project. **Our local history teachers have found this site extremely useful in their history lessons in demonstrating excellent history essays written by secondary school students.** We hope to be able to play a part in heightening the use of this site in the teaching of history in this part of the world.

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--

Ng Song Beng
Project Leader, MirrorS
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