



Spring 4-24-2017

Adams County in the Great War

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Tracey, Jonathan, "Adams County in the Great War" (2017). *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*. 238.
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Adams County in the Great War

Abstract

The First World War has generally faded from American memory, and is generally considered to have not cost the United States much. Although the country did not experience the total destruction that Europe endured, even small towns such as Gettysburg paid a cost, and the sacrifices made one hundred years ago should not be forgotten. First off is a brief summary of Adams County in the war, sourced primarily from Paul Foulk and Percy Eichelberger's "Adams County in the World War." Foulk and Eichelberger were students of Gettysburg College (then Pennsylvania College) and returned from service in the war and wrote the book to chronicle the county's involvement. Consisting primarily of statistics and lists of soldiers from each town in the county, the book concludes with accounts written by soldiers about their overseas experiences.

Keywords

Gettysburg PA, Jonathan Tracey, World War I

Disciplines

History | Military History | Public History | United States History

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This blog post originally appeared in The Gettysburg Compiler and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

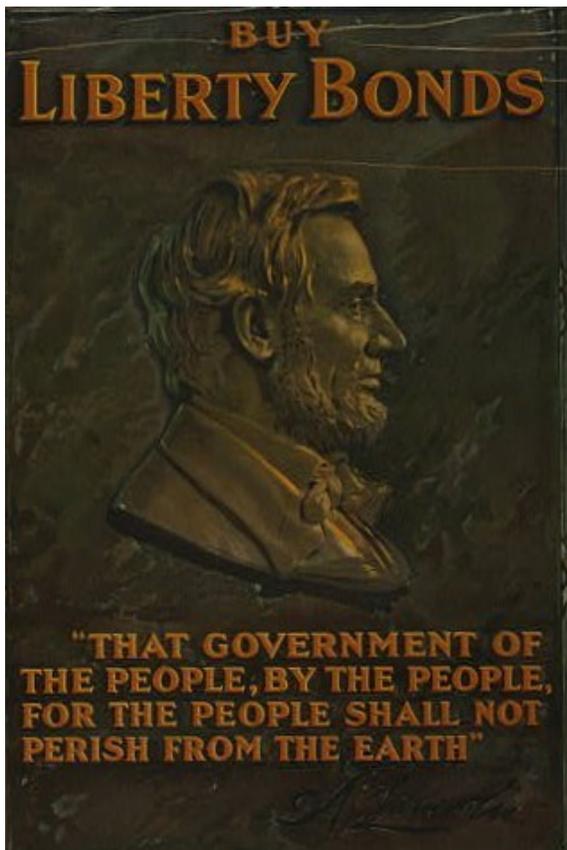
THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

Adams County in the Great War

By [Jonathan Tracey '19](#)

The First World War has generally faded from American memory, and is generally considered to have not cost the United States much. Although the country did not experience the total destruction that Europe endured, even small towns such as Gettysburg paid a cost, and the sacrifices made one hundred years ago should not be forgotten. First off is a brief summary of Adams County in the war, sourced primarily from Paul Foulk and Percy Eichelberger's "Adams County in the World War." Foulk and Eichelberger were students of Gettysburg College (then Pennsylvania College) and returned from service in the war and wrote the book to chronicle the county's involvement. Consisting primarily of statistics and lists of soldiers from each town in the county, the book concludes with accounts written by soldiers about their overseas experiences.



Many residents of Adams County supported the war effort by buying war bonds. Image courtesy of [Library of Congress](#).

Adams County responded with great vigor to the news that the United States would be joining the war. The initial draft registration of men included only those between the ages of 21 and 31, but was eventually broadened to all men ages 18 to 45. By the end of the war, 6,376 county men were registered and divided into several “classes” based on exemptions such as dependents or certain occupations. Of these, 548 were called to service and only two delinquencies were reported. The small number of delinquencies indicates a general acceptance of being drafted among county inhabitants. Additionally, 330 past, current, or future students of Gettysburg College enlisted, ranging from the Class of 1873 all the way to the Class of 1923. Naturally, the vast majority came from the Class of 1914 to the Class of 1920.

Inhabitants of Adams County found ways other than military service to assist the nation. During the war, the government raised funds through five Liberty Loan drives. The sale of loans allowed governments to offset the cost of war. The most notable outburst of patriotism was the Third Liberty Loan, launched in April 1918. Although many districts did not meet their goal, the county quota of \$1,069,530 was exceeded when county residents raised \$1,392,650. Gettysburg alone raised \$479,000, while its quota was merely \$275,110. Over 18% of the county participated in the Third Loan alone. In total, the county raised \$5,107,500, surpassing their quota of \$5,061,400.



During World War I, Gettysburg was home to Camp Colt, which operated as a training camp for the army's new tank units. Photo courtesy of [Eisenhower National Historic Site](#).

In addition, over 5,000 county residents enrolled in aid programs run by the Gettysburg Chapter of the American Red Cross. Divided into departments suited for certain tasks, branches knit hundreds of sweaters, made bandages, gathered clothes for war refugees, assisted the families of soldiers who had gone overseas, and provided food to troop trucks passing through as well as ill soldiers at Camp Colt and wounded recovering in Carlisle, PA. Of course, all food packages included a key Adams County staple—apples. One of the more touching projects of the Chapter entailed assembling care packages for troops during Christmastime. In 1917, they sent packages that included writing paper, pencil, candy, sweets, and a handkerchief. In 1918, they assisted families in creating packages for sons that were still overseas despite the armistice.

In total, 1,086 men from Adams County enlisted in the Armed Forces during the First World War, comprising of over 3% of the county's population. The county suffered 53 losses due to either combat wounds, death overseas of other causes, or died in the US while enlisted, generally of the flu. An additional 57 men suffered wounds while an additional 32 suffered at the hands of gas. Of these, 374 servicemen were from Gettysburg along with 16 of the wounded men and 11 of those who were gassed. Although not all from Adams County itself, students from Gettysburg College paid the price as well. Fourteen graduates and current students sacrificed their lives.

In the end, Adams County contributed more to the war effort than might have been expected of a small corner of Pennsylvania. Men of the county as well as those attending the local college both believed in what the nation was fighting for, and were willing to give their lives in a war that was seen as a fight for democracy. Those who didn't enlist in the military were still willing to contribute their time or money, working with the Red Cross or buying war bonds. The people of Adams County supported the war effort, and were proud of what they had contributed afterward, as shown in the publishing of the book these statistics were pulled from. These days, although the war may not be remembered by all, it is still important to understand the enthusiasm that residents of Adams County put forth in their response to the American entry into the war one hundred years ago.

Sources:

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