

Women in WWI

- Overview of the War
- How Women's Lives Changed
- Women in the War Zone
- The 3 R's: Riveting, Writing and Relief
- Social and Political Issues Affecting Women
- Conclusion

OVERVIEW OF THE WAR

Overview of WWI

- Began on the 28th of July 1914 and ended on the 11th of November 1918.
- Sparked by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife on
- June 28, 1914.



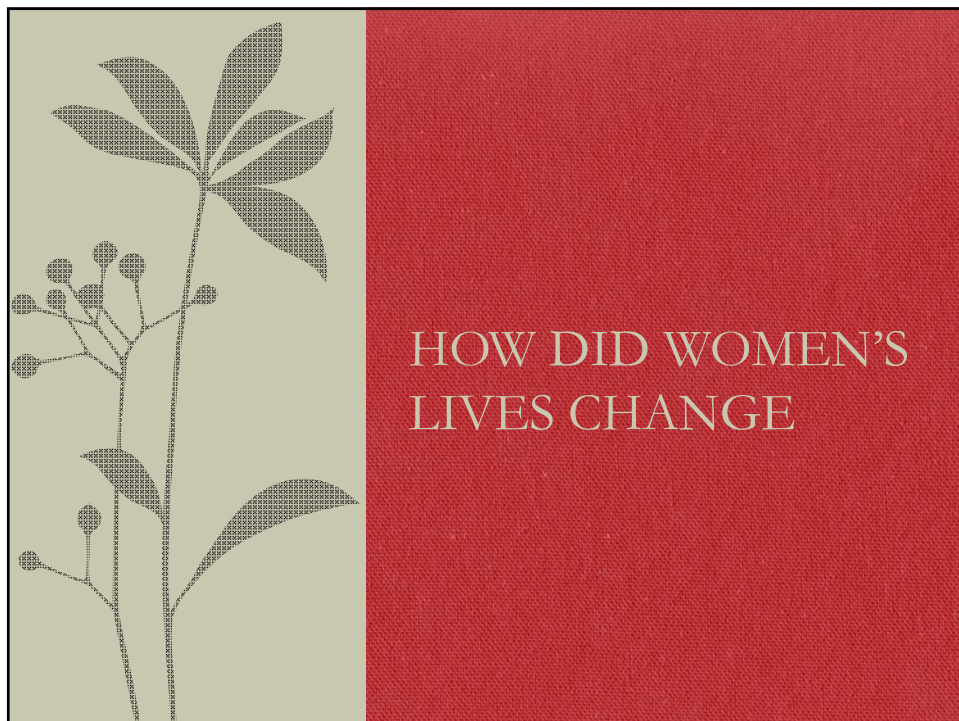
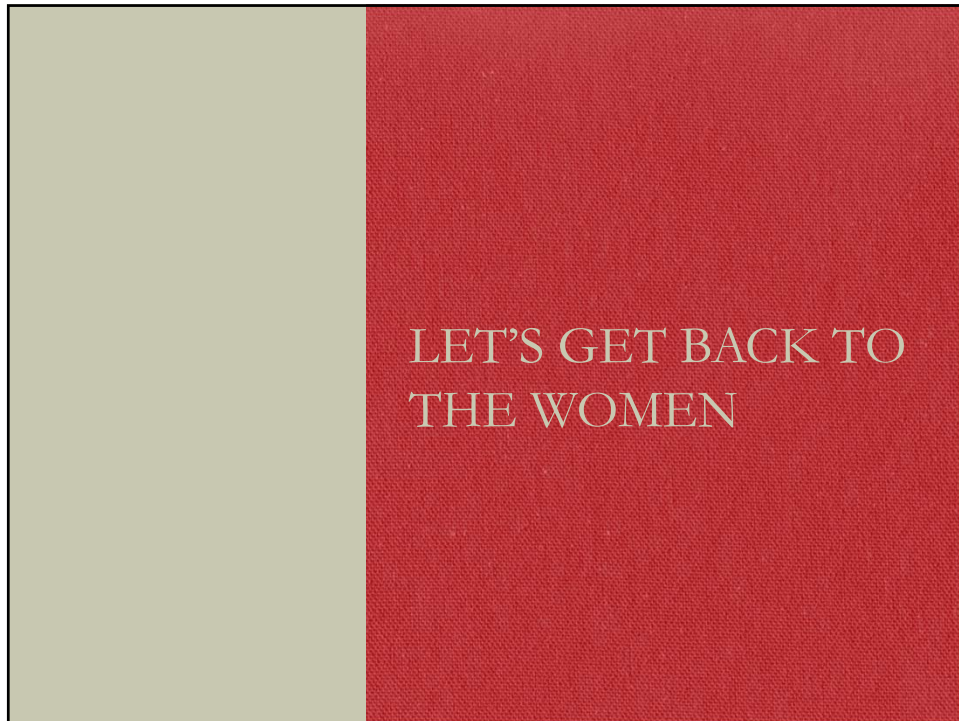
Princess Sophie, wife of
Archduke Ferdinand

World War I Alliances

- The Triple Alliance:
Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy.
- The Triple Entente:
Britain, France and Russia and A.N.Z.A.C's
(Australian, New Zealand Army Corp)
- Italy joins the Allies, on April 26, 1915
- America joins the triple entente in 1917

Results of World War I

- 9 million men died
- 21 million were wounded
- 4 Empires collapsed
- Communist Revolution in Russia
- Treaty of Versailles considered “blueprint for a war 20 years later”
- “Spanish Influenza” epidemic, beginning in 1918,
killed 1/5 of the world’s population



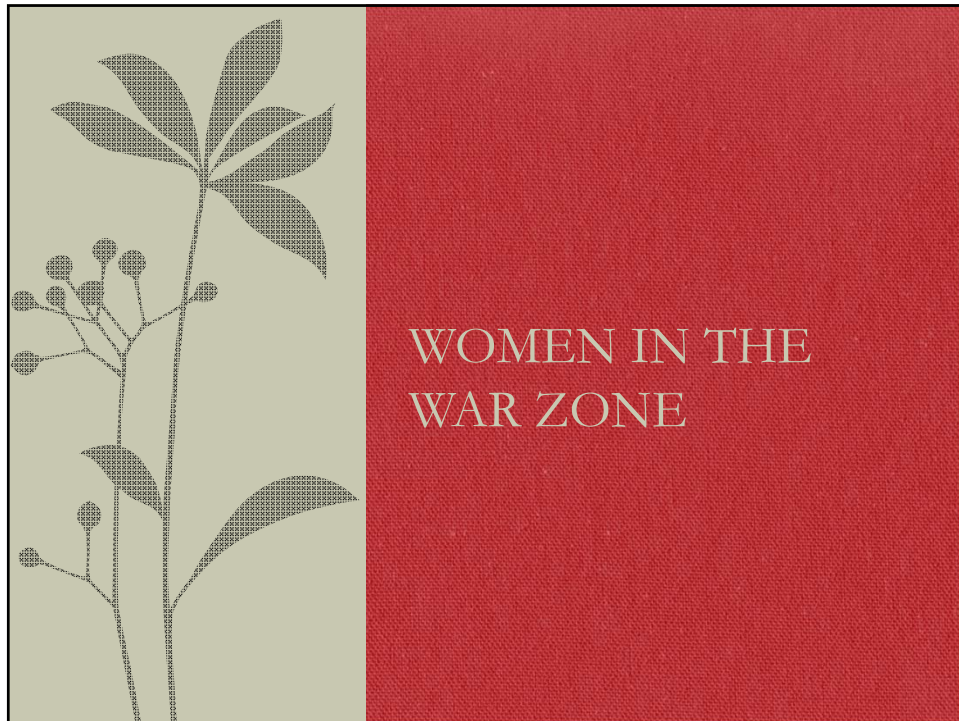
Changing Lives of Women

- Before the war, women had traditional roles of home and child care. There were some women working outside the home, but in jobs such as teachers, librarians and domestic workers.
- Men had all the high earning jobs.
- When the men went to war, women began to fill those jobs. They worked in munitions factories, farms, shipyards and machine shops. For the most part, they were paid less than the men.

Some statistics

- 1917 survey
 - 68% of women had changed jobs since the war began
 - 16% had moved out of domestic service
 - 22% that were unemployed in 1914 now had work
 - 23% had changed factories.
- Women working in engineering and munitions
 - 1914 - 212,000
 - 1918 - nearly one million





Women in the War Zone

- Nurses
- Doctors
- Ambulance Drivers
- The Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D)
- Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps
- U.S. Army Signal Corp
- Soldiers
- Spies
- Entertainers

Nurses - How They Lived and Worked

- The nurses of WWI worked on the front line, picking up the wounded soldiers.
- They made dressings for scars and battle wounds.
- Ran canteens.
- Drove ambulances.
- Organized, cleaned, and set-up hospital rooms.
- Worked from sun up to sun down, and barely got any sleep.
- The conditions were cold and sometimes rainy.
- The sounds of the battlefield could be heard in the nurses' living quarters.

British Nurses

- Queen Alexandria's Imperial Military Nursing Service
- Known as the QAs, nursing branch of the British Army
- Traces its heritage to Florence Nightingale
- Officially established in 1881, but received Royal Warrant in 1902 and Queen Alexandria became President

American Nurses in WWI

- U.S. Army Nurse Corp founded in 1901. 35,000 American women served as nurses in WWI.
- 18 African-American Army nurses served stateside caring for German prisoners of war and African-American soldiers and lived in segregated quarters.
- The American Red Cross sent 20,000 nurses.
- More than 1,476 U.S. Navy nurses served in military hospitals stateside and overseas.
- But....just how many?



American Red Cross nurses, PULSF. 12 Dec. 2010

American Nurses

More than 400 U.S. military nurses died in the line of duty during World War I.

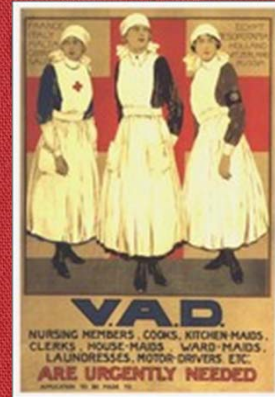
The vast majority of these women died from a highly contagious form of influenza known as the Spanish Flu, which swept through crowded military camps and hospitals and ports of embarkation.

Helen Fairchild served as a nurse with the American Expeditionary Force. Fairchild began experiencing severe abdominal pains, which later escalated. Doctors attributed Fairchild's death to the poisonous mustard gas that was used by the Allies.

Edith Ayres and Helen Wood became the first female members of the U.S. military killed in the line of duty. They were killed on May 20, 1917 aboard the USS Mongolia en route to France. The ship's crew fired the deck guns during a practice drill, and one of the guns exploded, spewing shell fragments across the deck and killing both nurses.

Voluntary Aid Detachment

- Established in 1909 to provide medical aid in war.
- Worked as
 - nurses
 - cooks
 - clerks
 - laundresses
 - ward maids
 - ambulance drivers
- 74,000 V.A.D's in 1914
- 2/3 women and girls.
- Not permitted to go to the front line until 1915



Nurses

International Red Cross

- Had the enormous challenge of establishing hospitals for the 21 million wounded soldiers
- In 1914, established the International Prisoner of War Agency



Over 1,2000 volunteers

Transferred 20 million letters and 1.9 million parcels

Helped exchange 200,000 POW

Identified 2 million POWs and contacted their families

Nurses

But there were even individuals who nursed:

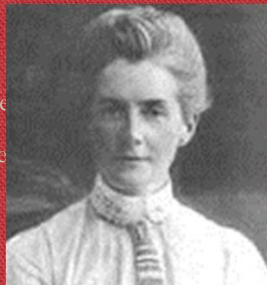
- American, Mary Borden, a wealthy woman living in England set up a mobile hospital unit on the Western Front
- Nursed men wounded in Ypres and the Somme
- Awarded a Croix de Guerre
- Met her second husband there, Brigadier General Edward Spears and became Lady Spears.



Mary Borden, center with Sir Edward Spears, back row left

Nurses – Edith Cavell

A pioneer of modern nursing, Edith Cavell was an English nurse. She helped around 200 allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium during WW1, and later was arrested for it and executed by a German firing squad in Oct., 1915.



there
Cavell

After her execution, more than 100,000 British men flocked to the recruiting stations.

At the recruiting station in Trafalgar Square, a sign stating, "Who will avenge Miss

Nurses

Agnes von Kurowsky Stanfield

- An American nurse who inspired the character "Catherine Barkley" in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.
- She served as a nurse in an American Red Cross hospital in Milan during WWI.
- Hemingway, a patient, fell in love with her and they planned to marry. Later, she wrote that she had become engaged to an Italian officer.



Nurses

Sophie Winton – Anesthesist

- In 1918 she joined the Nursing Corps, then part of the Red Cross, and was assigned to Mobile Hospital No. 1 in the Chateau-Thierry area in France, often giving as many as 25-30 anesthetics a day with open drop ether and chloroform. She received the French Croix de Guerre and six overseas service bars for her service on the front lines during WWI.



Doctors

Women's Hospital Corps (Britain)

- Created by militant suffragists, the WHC successfully ran two military hospitals in France from September 1914 to January 1915.
- In 1915 the War Office invited them to run a military hospital in London.
- The Endell Street Military Hospital, the first hospital in the UK established for men by medical women, was open from May 1915 to December 1919. In that time, its doctors saw 26,000 patients and performed over 7,000 major operations.

Doctors

- In 1914, Dr. Elsie Inglis founded the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service, an organization founded by the women's suffrage movement with the express aim of providing all female staffed relief hospitals for the Allied War effort.
- Inglis offered the services of the SWH to the British army but was rebutted with the words, *"My good lady, go home and sit still!"*
- But, France, Russia and Serbia welcomed them.
- Provided doctors, nurses, orderlies, ambulance drivers and cooks throughout the war.
- In Serbia, the improved hygiene she introduced vastly reduced typhus and other epidemics.
- Captured and repatriated home, she began to raise funds for a team to go to Russia, but had to stop because of cancer.



Ambulance Drivers

U.S. Women's Motor Corps in France



Most were young, single, well-educated women. They were upper or middle class and had professional experience.

Ambulance Drivers

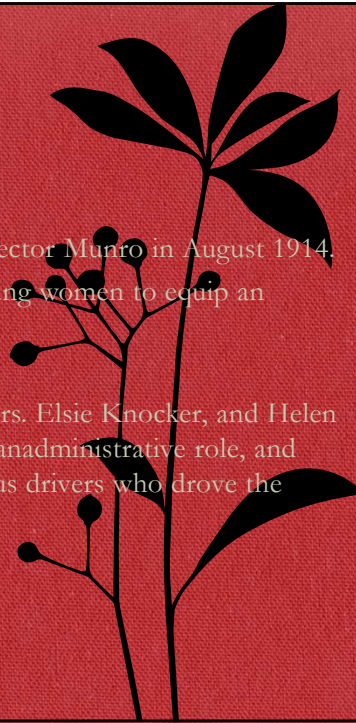
FANYs (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry)

- Brainchild of Lord Kitchener, set up in 1907.
- Initially sent nurses in on horseback to places where vehicles could not go.
- Operated by the bold and audacious Grace McDougall.
- FANYs were used during the Great War in dangerous ambulance driving between the front line and field hospitals they ran.
- Also for cooked and kept canteens.
- By the Armistice, they had been awarded many decorations for bravery, including 17 Military Medals, 1 Legion d'Honneur and 27 Croix de Guerre.

Ambulance Drivers

Monro Ambulance Corps

- Put together by the slightly eccentric Dr. Hector Munro in August 1914.
- Dr. Munro advertised for “adventurous young women to equip an ambulance unit for service in Belgium.”
- Received 200 applications, accepted 4.
- Lady Dorothea Feilding, Mairi Chisholm, Mrs. Elsie Knocker, and Helen Gleason. May Sinclair, a novelist, joined in an administrative role, and there were two doctors, and two London bus drivers who drove the Daimler and Fiat ambulances.



Ambulance Drivers

Some notable people who drove ambulances

- Gertrude Stein - writer and feminist
- Molly Brown – Titanic survivor
- Helene Dutrieu – pioneering French aviator
- Florence Jaffrey Harriman – socialite and Director of the Women’s Motor Corp in France
- Marjory Stoneman Douglas – American conservationist
- Dorothy Canfield Fisher – American social activist and author
- Marion Barbara “Joe” Carstairs – eccentric socialite and powerboat racer

Women in the U.S. Military

- Nearly 13,000 women enlisted in the Navy and the Marine Corps on the same status as men and the same pay (\$28.75/month).
- The US Army took much longer, but finally enlisted 11,880 women as Yeomen (F) to serve primarily in clerical positions. 14 of these were African-American.
- They wore a uniform blouse with insignia.
- The Navy's policy was extended to the Coast Guard Yeomanettes. Much smaller number
- These are the first women mustered in the U.S. Military.
- Considered to be veterans after the war.



Queen Mary's Auxillary Army Corp

- Set up by the English government in 1918 and was disbanded in 1920.
- Took "soft jobs" so men could be sent to war.
- Over 57,000 women volunteered between January 1917 and November 1918.
- Some of the volunteers where sent to the battlefields in France on the 31st of March 1917.
- Member's had to exercise every day and had strict uniforms.
- Members served as waitresses, cooks, clerks, telephonists, and as and taught people how to use gas masks.

U.S. Army Signal Corps

- 300 women were sworn into the U.S. Army as volunteers. In response to General Pershing's emergency call for bilingual (French-English) long-distance operators to run the switchboards.
- It is the first effort in the history of warfare to connect the foot-soldiers in the trenches to their generals behind the lines.



The "Hello Girls"

U.S. Army Signal Corps

300 women were sworn into the Army and went through basic training, given the rank of Lieutenant and had the "honor" buying their own uniform.

233 dispatched to Europe and served on the Front, often in imminent danger. 10 received commendations for bravery under fire.

But, upon return to US, told that they couldn't have been in the Army because only men in the Army.

In 1930, took a bill to Congress to ask for recognition.

Finally, in 1978, as women allowed to join the Army, these women are recognized for their service.



Oleda
Christide

Soldiers – Maria Bochkarvea

Maria Bochkarvea

- Born in Russia in 1889, from a poor family.
- First worked as a laborer on a construction site then on a steamship.
- In 1914 she joined the 25th Reserve Battalion of the Russian Army.
- In the next three years she got three medals for bravery and was wounded twice.
- In 1917 she established the Women's Battalion.
- Over 2,000 women joined but her strict rules brought this figure to around 250.
- Maria brought her "Battalion of Death" to the Austrian front.



Women Soldiers

Other women who served as soldiers

- Dorothy Lawrence, alias Denis Smith. British journalist who enlisted in the B.E.F. Tunneling Division.
- Flora Sandes – British woman who enlisted in the Serbian Army and earned the rank of Sergeant Major. She stayed on after the war and was promoted to Major.
- Maria Yurlova – a Cossack who fought in the Armenian army against Turkey.
- Olga Krasilnikov, a Russian woman, disguised herself as a man and fought in nineteen battles in Poland. an received the Cross of St. George.

Spies

Louise de Bettignies



- French spy for the British using the name Alice Dubois.
- From her home in Lille, she ran a vast intelligence network called the Alice Service.
- It was so effective that she was nicknamed by her English superiors "the queen of spies."
- Arrested by the Germans in October 1915 and sentenced to death but her sentence was commuted to forced labor for life. After 3 years, she died on 27 September 1918 as a result of botched surgery for pleurisy.
- Other networks followed her lead such as Service Michelin and White Lady.

Spies

Maria de Victorica

- Known as "The Kaiser's Woman in NY."
- She planned to set buoys off the coast between NY and Cape Hatteras that would identify sinking positions.
- She planned to be saboteurs on to English warships.
- She planned to import plaster statues of saints and the Virgin Mary filled with explosives.
- She was apprehended by the M1-8 Secret Ink Subsection who found her letters written in invisible ink.

Spies

Mati Hari

- Born Margaretha Geertruida "Margreet" Zelle MacLeodbetter.
- Dutch exotic dancer and courtesan.
- Convicted of being a spy for Germans.
- Executed by firing squad in France in 1917 when she was 41 years old.



Entertainers

- Women entertainers were treated chivalrously by troops, not as sex objects.
- Doughboys behaved badly towards French women, but put American ones "on a pedestal."
- Women entertained troops not only with song and dance but with lectures, dramatic readings, and poetry.



Elsie Janis, The Sweetheart of the AEF

Entertainers

Troops clamored for Ella Wheeler Wilcox's readings of her own sentimental poems urging sexual purity:

I may lie in the mud of the trenches,
I may reek with blood and mire,
But I will control, by the God in my soul,
The might of my man's desire.



Ella Wilcox Wheeler

Entertainers

A soldier described seeing Sarah Willmer perform:

"I shall never forget as long as I live the blessed white dress she had on the night she recited to us. We had not seen a white dress ... in years. There we were with our gas masks at alert, all ready to go into the line, and there she was talking to us just like a girl from home. It sure was a great sight, you bet."

The Oldest Profession

- Long lines of soldiers formed outside the French military brothels.
- According to the dictates of good discipline, officers' whore-houses were indicated by blue lights and other ranks' by red lamps.
- One and half million Allied troops died from syphilis and gonorrhea.
- The Kaiser's army strictly regulated the 'sexual logistics' of the troops and cut its VD casualty rate to half that of the French army by 1918.
- The VD rates of the British army were 7 times higher than the Germans, principally because national prudery prevented the British high command from acknowledging that there was any problem until 1915, when the Canadian and New Zealand prime ministers forced the chiefs of staff to issue free contraceptives to the troops.

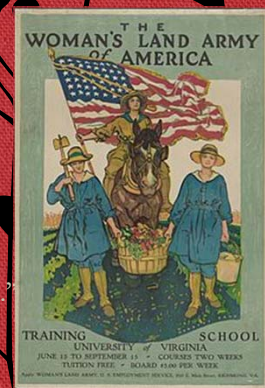
THE 3 R'S:
RIVETING, WRITING
AND RELIEF

Factory and Farm Workers

- In Britain, over 1 million women worked in factories, called “munitionettes” or “Tommy’s sister.”
- In Germany, over 700,000 women worked in the munitions industry.
- While not paid as much as men, the work still paid more than traditional women’s work and offered some escape from drudgery.
- During the war, women performed virtually all jobs previously done by men.
- But, the work was grueling.
- And, it didn’t last after the war was over.

Women’s Land Army

- When the men went to war ,women had to do the farm work.
- Called Land Girls.
- The women did all farm jobs.
- They worked 50 hours in the summer and 48 hours in the winter.
- In 1917 there were over 260,000 women working as farmers in Britain.
- In America, The Women’s Land Army of America, 20,000 women farmed and were called “farmerettes.”



Relief Workers

Hundreds of committees and organizations formed to raise money and supplies for relief efforts.

Edith Wharton ran an American relief agency in Paris. Throughout America, Edith Wharton Societies were formed to fund her efforts.

She was awarded the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1916, even though the government had voted not to give this to civilians until the war was over. Edith was the exception.



Relief Workers

American Red Cross

- Local Chapters in the US –
 - 1914 107
 - 1918 3,864
- Membership
 - 1914 – 17,000
 - 1918 – 20 million and 11 million Junior Red Cross Members
- Raised \$400 million in funds and material to support programs for American and Allied forces and civilian refugees.



Relief Workers

The sale of Girl Scout cookies began as a way to finance troop activities in 1917, when the Mistletoe Troop in Muskogee, Oklahoma, baked cookies and sold them in its high school cafeteria as a service project to raise funds to support soldiers.



Early Girl Scout Troop
Photo from the National
WH Museum

A Few Other Women's Organizations in WWI

Europe and Australia:

- Women's Hospital Corps
- Women's Emergency Corps
- Women's National Service League
- Country Women's Association
- Women's Christian Temperance Union
- Australian Women's National League
- Australian Comforts Fund
- Cheer-Up Society
- Australian Women's Service Corps
- Women's Peace Army
- Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps
- Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service
- Lotta Svärd, a Finnish voluntary auxiliary organization for women



American Organizations

United States:

- Women's Committee of the Council on National Defense
- YWCA and the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC)
- Women's Defense League
- American Committee for Devastated France
- Smith College Relief Unit
- American Fund for the French Wounded
- French-American Society for the Welfare of Wounded French Soldiers

Writers

Sharon Ouditt, author of *Women Writers of the First World War* features over 100 women writers creating:

- 160 contemporary accounts (books and articles)
- 21 official publications
- 19 diaries
- 15 volumes of letters
- 61 autobiographies, journals, archive material, literary criticism, social and cultural history, and biographies
- 7 plays



Writers and Journalists

Edith Wharton

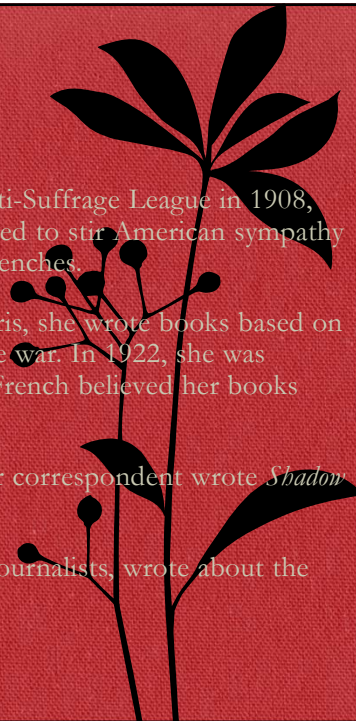
- Invited by the French government to report on the Front and military hospitals.
- Received the Chevalier de Honour in 1916, even though the French government decreed that no civilians would receive the award until after the war.
- Edited *The Book of the Homeless* to raise funds.



Writers and Journalists

Some of the many women writers:

- **Mrs. Humphrey Ward** – Head of the Anti-Suffrage League in 1908, published diverse propaganda books intended to stir American sympathy for the Allied war effort after touring the trenches.
- **Mildred Alrich** – an American living in Paris, she wrote books based on journal entries and letters written during the war. In 1922, she was awarded the Legion d'honneur because the French believed her books helped to persuade America to join the war.
- **Elisabeth S. Sergeant** – Journalist and war correspondent wrote *Shadow Shapes: The Journal of a Wounded Woman*.
- **Nellie Bly** – one of the first investigative journalists, wrote about the Eastern Front for the Germans.





Women and Politics

Gertrude Bell

- An English writer, archaeologist and spy.
- Traveled extensively in the Middle East, working with tribal leaders.
- Highly influential to British imperial policy-making due to her contacts.



Worked with T.E. Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia.
Played a major role in establishing the modern state of Iraq.

She has been described as "one of the few representatives of His Majesty's Government remembered by the Arabs with anything resembling affection."

Women's Suffrage

The quest for women's right to vote began in America in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention.

It began in 1872 with the formation of the National Society for Women's Suffrage.

In France, the fight for women's suffrage began with the French Revolution in 1789, but was not granted until 1944.

By the early 1900's, the suffragettes were frustrated and growing increasingly militant.

Women's Suffrage in England

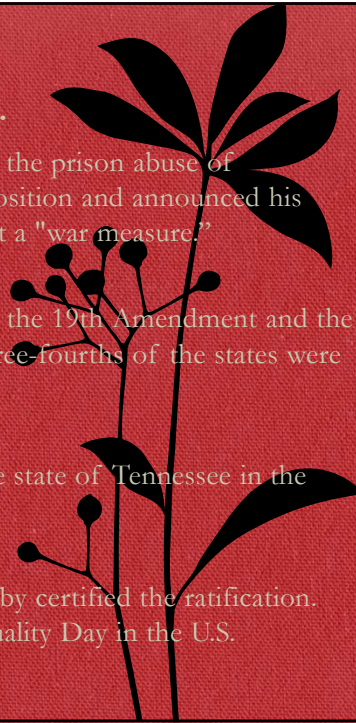


But, in England, when the war started, the suffragettes focused on the war effort and were rewarded by an act was passed enfranchising women over 30 who met property requirements.

In 1928, it was extended to all women age of 21.

Women's Suffrage in the U.S.

- In 1917, in response to public outcry about the prison abuse of suffragists, President Wilson reversed his position and announced his support for a suffrage amendment, calling it a "war measure."
- In 1919, both the House and Senate passed the 19th Amendment and the battle for state ratification commenced. Three-fourths of the states were needed to ratify the amendment.
- The battle for ratification came down to the state of Tennessee in the summer of 1920.
- On August 26, 1920, Secretary of State Colby certified the ratification. That day is now celebrated as Women's Equality Day in the U.S.



Women's Suffrage in the U.S.

This Valentine sent Woodrow Wilson to implies a mutual benefit for both the president and the suffrage cause. The hundreds of women's votes Symbolized by the hearts, serve as a reminder to the president of the voter support available to him in future elections form woman voters, should he come out in support of the constitutional amendment.



Civil Rights

WWI was a transformative experience for African Americans:

- The Great Migration (1914- 1920) – WWI cut off immigration and pool of cheap labor. 500,000 African Americans moved to cities to work.
- When the draft was implemented, over 1 million African-Americans answered the call. Roughly 370,000 were inducted into the army.
- Two combat divisions of black soldiers – the 92nd and the 93rd – created.



Officer Training Camp for black soldiers opened in Des Moines, Iowa on June 18, 1917 with 1,250 candidates. 639 received officer commissions.

Source: Africana Age, website of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Civil Rights

- The 93rd Division 369th Infantry earned fame and were called The Harlem Hellfighters.
- Also gained notoriety for its first class band, popularizing jazz to war torn Europe.
- But received equal acclaim for combat – served 191 days and in that time, ceded no ground to the Germans.
- First American regiment to reach the Rhine.
- Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts – first Americans to receive the Croix de Guerre.
- In all, 71 received this honor.



Source: Africana Age, website of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Civil Rights

The French soldiers treated African-Americans with respect. For many, this was the first time they experienced it. Lemuel Moody, a soldier in the 369th stated it was:

"...altogether improving and broadening. It changed my outlook on life. I see things now with different eyes."



Civil Rights and African American Women

- National Association of Colored Women led "liberty loan" campaigns, held rallies and provided support for black troops.
- Joined the Red Cross and the YMCA.
- Created organizations such as the Women's Auxilliary of the New York 15th National Guard.
- Also spurred political activism. In Mobile, AL, 250 laundresses walked off the job in protest of poor working conditions.



Source: African Age, website of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Conclusion

"If the ghost that haunts the towns of Ypres and Arras and Albert is the British Tommy, slogging with rifle and pack through its ruined streets, then the ghost of Boulogne and Etaples and Rouen ought to be a girl. She's called Elsie or Gladys or Dorothy, her ankles are swollen, her feet are aching, her hands reddened and rough. She has little money, no vote, and has almost forgotten what it feels like to be really warm. She sleeps in a tent. Unless she has told a diplomatic lie about her age, she is twenty-three. She is the daughter of a clergyman, a lawyer or a prosperous businessman, and has been privately educated and groomed to be a 'lady'. She wears the unbecoming outdoor uniform of a VAD or an army nurse. She is on active service, and as much a part of the war as Tommy."

-- Lyn MacDonald, *The Roses of No Man's Land*



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