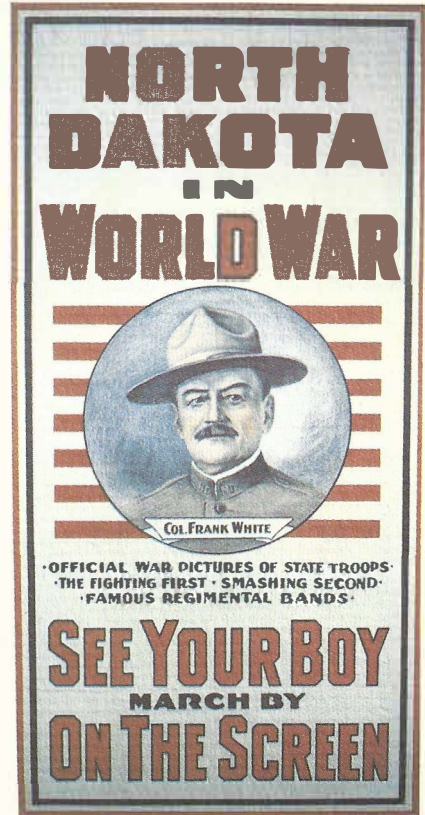
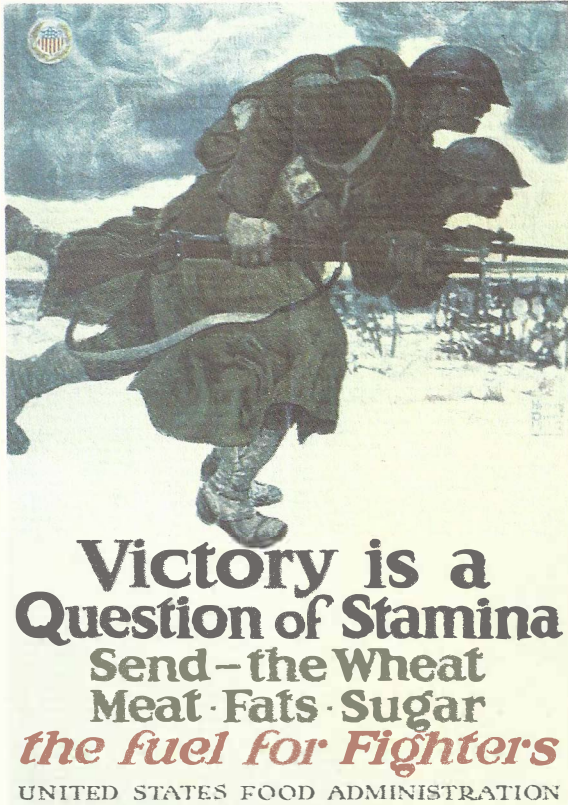


Editor's Choice



State Historical
Society of
North Dakota
Collection

WORLD WAR I POSTER COLLECTION

by Gerald G. Newborg

Among the holdings of the State Historical Society is a large and colorful collection of World War I era posters. Gathered in 1917 and 1918 by Dr. Melvin R. Gilmore, State Historical Society curator from 1916 to 1923, the collection consists of 667 posters, including some from foreign countries. Gilmore actively worked to build as complete a collection as possible, obtaining duplicate American posters which he then exchanged with European dealers. The result is an extensive collection of poster art, or poster propaganda, at its zenith.

In the era before radio and television, perhaps the most striking communication device was the poster. An army of designers and illustrators volunteered to do figurative battle on walls and fences and in store windows. Charles Dana Gibson (creator of the Gibson Girl) led the "Division of Pictorial Publicity," formed the month the United States entered World War I, April 1917. Meeting weekly to farm out requests for posters from Government departments, the committee, through its art, recruited soldiers and sailors, raised money to finance the war effort, mobilized public opinion, and increased the

production of industrial and agricultural goods. Blacks and dark greens outlined the shadowy, evil countenances of the Kaiser and his minions while bright colors, most prominently reds, whites, and blues, clearly identified the forces of liberty. Every activity was a patriotic effort which, if completed successfully, would lead to victory. Clearly, food was ammunition in the battle fought by the United States Food Administration (1). Farmers were advised to grow more food, workers urged to build more ships, and all Americans asked to eat less meat and wheat. At times posters drew people to the young medium destined to be even more powerful, the motion picture. "See Your Boy March By," North Dakota's proud parents were told (r). The strong and unvarying emotional appeal to patriotism and duty runs throughout the collection of posters.

A sample of twenty-five posters which were used to promote the sale of Liberty and Victory Bonds has been selected for a traveling exhibit. For further information about the Liberty Loan Posters exhibit, contact the Museum Division of the State Historical Society of North Dakota.



Bismarck photographer Frithjof Holmboe was a local pioneer in the motion picture industry. He formed The Publicity Film Company to produce promotional films for local organizations. With the advent of World War I, he also produced a motion picture featuring North Dakota army units during training. This poster promoting that film is part of the World War I poster collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota. While the fate of the film itself is unknown, some outtakes of units training at Fort Lincoln south of Bismarck are also part of the Society collections. Frank White, whose portrait highlights the poster, was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and World War I. His eventual appointment as United States Treasurer is featured in this issue.



State Historical Society of North Dakota
612 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0830



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