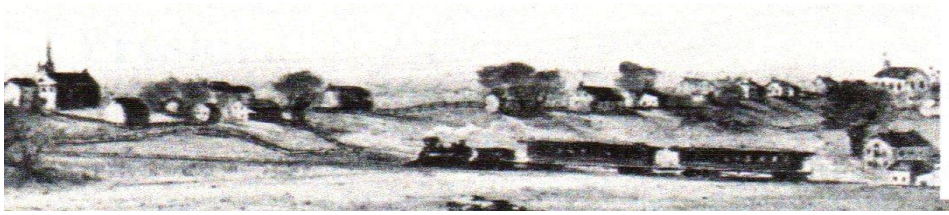


# Madison Historical Society

Madison, N.J



February 2017  
Newsletter  
3rd edition 2016-2017

The Madison Historical Society Presents

**Professor James Carter**  
**Department of History**  
**Drew University**



## *“America’s Entry Into World War I”*



**March 21 7:00 PM Chase Room**  
**Madison Public Library**

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## Message from President Linda Connors

Madison is my hometown. I wasn't fortunate enough to grow up in Madison, but I've spent two-thirds of my life here and hope never to leave. But I was never very knowledgeable about Madison history. I knew about the roses and Mrs. Dodge, everyone knows about Mrs. Dodge, but little else. About five years ago I began volunteering with the Madison Historical Society. I've always been interested in history and Madison's history would be new to me.

Madison has a fascinating history! This town had other benefactors besides Mrs. Dodge, among them, D. Willis James and James A. Webb. Do you know the significance of the railroad in the growth of the rose industry, or the negative impact of the advent of air freight? You might surmise that Keep St. was named after Mr. Keep, but do you know that he had an umbrella factory there, or that during World War II, the Madison Forge ironworks received an award for exceeding production goals? A rose industry, an umbrella factory, an ironworks—not the Madison we know today but one that shaped our present community.

All this knowledge, and some new friends, because I volunteered. Some information was acquired incidentally as I was helping in the office. I urge you to do the same. The time commitment is flexible and average skills are sufficient. Call or email today and let us know of your interest in Madison's history.

## More on James Carter



James Carter is associate professor of History at Drew University and chair of the department. He holds a Ph.D. from University of Houston and specializes in American foreign relations, the Vietnam War, the United States and East Asia, the Cold War, modernization theory, political economy, and nation building. His book *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and State Building, 1954-1968* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2008. He has also written articles on war profiteering in Vietnam and Iraq and the US advisory effort in Vietnam, and he has published reviews and essays in *The Journal of Military History*, *Peace & Change*, *Education About Asia*, *Itinerario*, *History News*

*Network*, and *The Asia Times*. His presentation will focus on U.S. entry into WWI. World War I marks a significant historical moment for the United States. On one hand, the war generated little public support at home and necessitated a substantial propaganda effort to win over the public, ushering in a new way of conducting war for the modern state. At the same time, US entry into the war under the leadership of Woodrow Wilson cast the country as the liberal savior for many modern nationalists across the colonial world, and, at the same time, as the nation leading the way out of Europe's morass of imperial conflict.

And on April 18....

**Pat Sanfitner**

Historian and Historical Costume Designer

**“Alexander Hamilton, The Little Lion”**

April 18

7:00 PM

Chase Room

Madison Public Library



## *Spotlight on History*

# America and Madison in World War I

## Part 2 of 2

In the last Madison Historical Society Newsletter we began a two part series to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of America's entry into WW I. The first article focused on the years immediately preceding America's joining the war effort. In this issue we turn our attention to America's and Madison's efforts in the war.

- Doug Simon

## The American War Effort



After a century of “relative” peace in Europe due to balance of power between the major countries of the region, the “war to end all wars” broke out in July 1914. The four year conflict pitted the Central Powers -- mainly Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey against the Allies -- mainly France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy and Japan. The war resulted in staggering losses for the twenty-six nations involved. Total combat deaths ran slightly in excess of 8,000,000. Total military deaths from all causes were between 8,500,000 and 10,800,000. Civilian deaths due to combat and crimes against humanity were slightly over 2,000,000 and another 5 to 6,000,000 perished from malnutrition and disease. Total deaths for the war ran somewhere between 15,000, 000 and 18,800,000.<sup>1</sup>

The financial costs of the war were enormous as well. In U.S. dollars (1914-1918), the total effort ran approximately \$60,643,160,000. The U.S. alone spent \$22,625,253,000.<sup>2</sup>

For three years (1914-1917) while the war raged on, President Woodrow Wilson tried to avoid American involvement in the war. But by Spring of 1917 Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare forced the United States' hand. The United States had never really participated in European politics, nor had it fought a major war beyond the North American Continent. While the sinking of the Lusitania and subsequent German submarine warfare were prime movers in shifting American public opinion about entering the war, the “straw that broke the camel's back,” was the revelation that Germany had attempted to recruit Mexico as an ally via the infamous Zimmerman telegram.



In June of 1917 the American Expeditionary Force under the command of General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing began arriving in France. By March of 1918 there were 250,000 U.S. soldiers in France and this will increase to 1,000,000 by July and 2,000,000 by November. Of these two-thirds would see combat. Total U.S. casualties for the war were 198,059 dead and 318,203 wounded. Prisoners of war and missing numbered 4,500.<sup>3</sup>

In many respects the Allies looked to America for salvation. Things were not going well. The Russian Revolution in 1917 led to its pulling out of the war allowing the shift of German troops from the eastern front to the west. Italy suffered a major defeat when the Austrians captured over 275,000 soldiers in the Battle of Caporetto forcing the diversion of British and French troops to fill the gap. Mutiny was spreading throughout the French Army raising the prospect of a collapse of the French army. German submarine warfare was so successful that predictions proliferated that Britain would collapse within months.<sup>4</sup> The influx of American troops rapidly began to turn the tide for the Allies. In addition, the entire American economy went on a wartime footing providing valuable food and other supplies to the war effort. All of this was demoralizing to the German forces. By November 1918, the war was over.

## Madison in WW I



**Elford Jarnan Rathbun, Jr. First Madisonian to enlist for WW I.**

In all, 324 Madisonians served as soldiers in the war and 14 gave their lives. Most of those who served were drafted. But it was a time when to be drafted was considered an honor. The first Madisonian to enlist was Elford Jarnan Rathbun, Jr. of Prospect Street. Indeed, Madison was among the first in enlistments in the County and in the State in proportion to its population.<sup>5</sup> Many of the soldiers served in battles like Chateau Thierry, Belleau Woods, Meuse-Argonne and the Marne.

One of the most famous Madisonians to serve was Amabel Scharff Roberts who was the first citizen of Madison and the first American Army nurse to give her life for her country on French soil. On January 17, 1918 in Etretat, France, Amabel Roberts died of blood poisoning while serving as an American Red Cross nurse at Base Hospital Number 2, run by Presbyterian Hospital of New York. Thus, Ms. Scarff became the first American Nurse to die in WW I.



**Amabel Scharff Roberts**



**Madison Service Medal to all those who served in WW I from the borough.**

Amabel Scharff was born in Madison on September 16, 1891. She lived with her mother, also named Amabel, her father Louis, a banker, brothers Louis and Adrian and sister Jeannette. The family home was at first located on High St. (now Woodland) and later moved to 19 Main St. World War I was not Amabel’s first trip to France. In 1910 the entire family traveled to Cherbourg on the passenger liner New York.<sup>6</sup> In 1913, Amabel graduated from Vassar College’s School of Nursing. During World War I, the Vassar community raised thousands of dollars for the French war effort and sent more than 100 to serve overseas. The commitment that Amabel took to her task tending to the sick and wounded soldiers in France was clearly reflected in an excerpt from one of her letters sent home to her mother. She wrote:

“ ‘He saves others, himself he cannot save.’ That is to me typical and descriptive of the soldier. I don’t think we can do enough for them. A life without sacrifice is utterly valueless. This is brought home to me more and more every day. These men have left everything—business, family, civilization. Yet surely it is better to die young, than to live a hundred years to no account. It is hard to keep the ultimate goal, the ideal of freedom, before one—when in such close contact with the sufferings caused by the striving toward that end. I am more thankful every day that I took up nursing—even though my bit is so very small indeed. More than half of my class at the training school are over here—among them my dearest friends. Am I not fortunate?”<sup>7</sup>

When Amabel Scharff Roberts returned to the United States she was put to rest in the Hillside Cemetery in Madison.



**Madison's World War I  
Monument**

While significant numbers of men and women headed for Europe, at home the citizens of Madison rallied to the war effort making significant contributions. Margaret Bittenheim Powell led an effort which resulted in the granting of a charter to establish a chapter of the American National Red Cross that raised thousands of dollars. One hundred eleven Madison men enrolled in a home guard known as the Home Defense League, a rifle club and military company, to defend the power plant and water supply, if need be. As in other communities across the country, Madisonians voluntarily contributed to the war effort by growing their own vegetables and conserved things like sugar and coal. Citizens were asked to observe gasless Sundays in order to save on fuel for the war effort. The Force Iron Works on Park Ave. began manufacturing parts for submarine chasers. Boy Scouts in the borough became as one newspaper article put it, “squirrels” by collecting peach stones; apricot, prune, native cherry, plum and olive pits; date seeds; butternut hickory nuts, walnuts and brazil nut shells, all used to make

carbon for gas masks.<sup>8</sup> Many of Madison’s soldiers served in battles like Chateau Thierry, Belleau Woods and it is no accident that two of Madison’s streets bear the names of those two battles.

On May 30, 1926 Madison’s WW I monument was dedicated in James Park. On it are the names of those Madisonians who served in the military during the war. In 1996 a private venture was undertaken to refurbish the memorial.

<sup>1</sup> “World War I Casualties.” *Wikipedia*. Wikipedia uses multiple sources including: *The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Military-World War – Estimated Statistics Branch General Staff, U.S. War Department, Feb. 1924*, and Dumas, Samuel (1923). *Losses of Life Caused by War* published by Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> “Financial Cost of the First World War, *Spartacus Education*, [www.spartacus-educational.com](http://www.spartacus-educational.com) and James Patterson, “The Cost of WW I,” August 11, 2014. <http://hubpages.com/education/world-war-1-The-Cost-of-War>.

<sup>3</sup> “America in World War I,” *Eye Witness to History.Com* <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/snpwwi1.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> “Elford J. Rathbun, Jr., First Local Youth to Answer U.S. Call to Arms,” *Madison Eagle*, April 6, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com)

<sup>7</sup> “A Message to 1918,” *The Vassar Miscellany News*, Vol II, No. 38, March 13, 1918, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Numerous articles on life in Madison during WW I appeared in the *Madison Eagle*. For this article, the following issues were consulted: March 9, 1917, June 29, 1917, May 25, 1917, and September 21, 1917. Also an article appeared in the January 1997 issue of the *Madison Historical Society Newsletter*, pp. 1-2 discussing life in Madison during WW I.



## *Looking Back In Time*

# **Downtown Madison 1967**

**By Linda Connors**

Space doesn't permit a detailed tour of downtown Madison in 1967, but join me for an overview of the variety of businesses available to shoppers 50 years ago. Many of the businesses will be familiar to you; others, now gone, speak to the different role played by small town business districts in community life.

In 1967, with the notable exception of the Acme Market (now Chipotle Grill) and Woolworth's (53 Main), nearly all of the businesses in the downtown were independent and locally owned. Some continue today under the same name and family, among them, Gerlach's Jewelers, Rose City Jewelers, Suburban Shop and Waverly Television. Other continuing businesses include the Madison Pet Store, A & E Television, Alfred's Sports Shop, Madison Pharmacy. Some favorites, including Schnipper's, Woolworth's and Burnet's Hardware, have closed their doors.

The variety of shops attests to a very different downtown from today. In 1967 the downtown was home to the Pork Store, Sodano's Poultry, a fish market, Madison Bakery, as well as the speciality grocers, Esposito Bros., Luciano's and Passomato. While in town you could pick up prescriptions and sundries at one of four pharmacies (West's, DeHart's, Whalen Drugs and Madison Pharmacy), bank at one of three banks (Madison National Bank, 12 Main, the only hometown bank), leave film to be developed at Madison Photo (48 Main), purchase a birthday card at Schnipper's (45-47 Main) or Friedman Stationery (62 Main).



**Main Street Madison in mid-60s**

Main Street offered a variety of clothing options: the Margay Shop (64), The Milrose Shop (52) and Katherine Early (25) for women's clothing; the haberdasheries Kurtz Men's Shop (33) and John Fries (40); and Kids Kloset (27) and Miller's Men and Boys (50). Shoes were sold at The Suburban Shop (28 Main) and Scinto Shoe Store (5 Waverly). Other establishments included Burnet's Hardware (60 Main), jewelry and gift shops, dry cleaners, The Cobbler (24 Waverly), florists, liquor stores, and hairdressers and barbers—all within walking distance.

Dining options were more modest 50 years ago. Downtown Main St. had Lusardi's (41), Jack and Nan's Luncheonette (22), Schwarman Deli (50 ½) and The Colonial Inn (54, soon The Meeting Place). Waverly Place was home to Spagnolia's Restaurant (3), O'Brien's Tavern (13) and Hennessey Bros. Deli (9). Mike's Subs was at 2 Central. Frank's Pizzeria (4 Park), owned by Frank and Rocco Iossa, was Madison's first pizzeria and still the only one in 1967 although this would quickly change. The Nautilus Diner (95) and the Bottle Hill Restaurant (117, later the Widow Brown's) were outside the core downtown district.

The downtown of 1967 is gone, the casualty of economic and demographic forces. Some of the businesses are familiar today but the variety is very different. Supermarkets, big box stores and malls have forced many local businesses to close. Madisonians eat out more, and Madison has become a restaurant destination. However, the downtown of 1967 was an important part of Madison's past, and deserves to be recorded and remembered.



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## **Miscellaneous:**

Calendars, Madison: 2008, 2009, 2012 by Joseph Mezzacca, Jr.	\$ 1.00
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|                              | * The War Years, On the Home Front 1940-1955  |

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## **The Madison Historical Society**

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Local History Center of the Madison Library

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