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## Article Title: Nebraska's Libraries at War

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Article Summary: In the First World War, Nebraska had the opportunity to share one million dollars that the War Council hoped to raise by October 1, 1917, to build, equip, and stock libraries for soldiers in thirty-two camps and cantonments. It was believed that the citizen army would be more effective and efficient if the troops lived clean, intelligent, and moral lives, and the American Library Association worked diligently to support the war effort by working toward that end.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: Charlotte Templeton, Frederick P Keppel, Herbert Putnam, Newton D Baker, William H Powers, Frank Hill, Wright Morris, Fred Morrow Fling, Willa Cather, Edith Tobitt, Malcolm Glenn Wyer, James Wyer, Burton E Stevenson, Elizabeth O'Linn-Smith, Major Pole, Matthew Dudgeon, Joy E Morgan, Anna V Jennings, John A Kees, Weldon Kees, Father Carey, Harry Dixon, Raymond B Fosdick, Edward L Tilton, Frank A Vanderlip, A K Atkinson, Mrs Pauline Frank, Lottie Kotz, Mrs Glenn Babson, George Beardsley. Names of collected authors have been excluded from this listing.

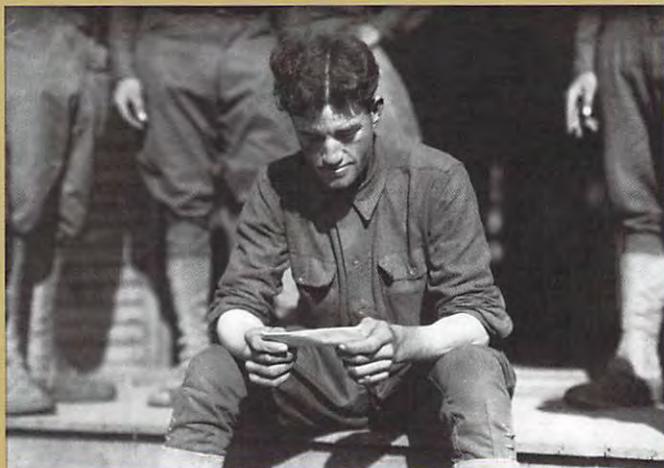
Place Names: This article has lists of towns and contributions made to the book campaign. No attempt has been made to include these extensive lists on this summary page.

Keywords: War Council; American Library Association; New York State Library School; Commission on Training Camp Activities; Wisconsin Free Library Commission; Commercial Club [Lincoln]; ALA War Finance Committee; "Captains of Publicity"

Photographs / Images: Bookplate, Headquarters Library, Fort Crook, Nebraska; Charlotte Templeton; James I Wyer; Campaign Poster, Library War Service; McDonald's Studio photograph of a goodbye kiss, Lincoln, Nebraska; Public Library Poster, American Library Association, May 1919; Malcolm Wyer; Camp Funston laundry chores; France tent encampment; poster promoting reading to the troops; Prepare Now for the Job You Want ... poster; soldiers KP duty

# NEBRASKA'S LIBRARIES *at* WAR

BY OLIVER POLLAK



NSHS RG2841-4-3

I do not believe it an exaggeration to say that no army ever before assembled has had more conscientious and painstaking thought given to the protection and stimulation of its mental, moral, and physical manhood.

Woodrow Wilson  
April 19, 1918

## 1917 - 1919



**Bookplate.** Headquarters Library, Ft. Crook, Nebr.

# WAR SERVICE LIBRARY

BOOKS ARE  
PROVIDED BY  
THE PEOPLE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES  
THROUGH THE  
AMERICAN  
LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION  
FOR  
THE USE OF  
THE SOLDIERS  
AND SAILORS

“I’ll confess that I should feel rather chagrined to have Nebraska fall short of its apportionment which, of course, it will if Omaha does not do anything,” wrote Charlotte Templeton to Edith Tobitt on September 29, 1917. Templeton, in Lincoln, had been executive secretary of the Nebraska Public Library Commission since 1909; Tobitt was a longtime Omaha librarian.<sup>1</sup>

I N ORDINARY TIMES TEMPLETON ADVISED libraries around the state, managed the Traveling Library, and supplied books to public institutions, including the State Penitentiary. But these were not ordinary times; six months earlier, on April 6, 1917, the United States had declared war against Germany, joining the Entente powers—Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia—in their struggle against the Central Powers. An indefatigable advocate of the library mission, Templeton was charged with organizing the response by Nebraska libraries to the war.



The apportionment she was fretting about in her letter to Edith Tobitt was Nebraska’s share of one million dollars—about one cent per American—that the War Council hoped to raise by October 1, 1917, to build, equip, and stock libraries for soldiers in thirty-two camps and cantonments. The War Council wanted book donations as well.

America had declared war on April 6; before the month had ended, Frederick P. Keppel, soon to be third assistant secretary of war, introduced Librarian of Congress Herbert Putnam to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. They agreed the citizen army would be more effective and efficient if the troops lived clean, intelligent, and moral lives, and they discussed how a patriotic professional organization like the American Library Association could support the war effort by working toward that end.

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**“WE HAVE BEEN RAISING FUNDS  
CONSTANTLY AND ARE RATHER  
GETTING USED TO IT NOW.”**

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In his 1919 report Putnam wrote, “That effort consisted not merely in the development of the fighting forces, and the training of these in the technique of war, but in unprecedented measures for the education, improvement, and welfare of the individuals among them.”<sup>2</sup>

The American Library Association met in Louisville, Kentucky, in June 1917. ALA President Walter L. Brown formed a committee, chaired by James Ingersoll Wyer, Jr., to assess ALA participation in the war effort.

Wyer, a Kansan by birth, received his library science training in Minnesota and New York. Like Charlotte Templeton, he had Nebraska connections and played a significant national role in fostering reading and literacy during World War I.<sup>3</sup>

A Spanish American War veteran, he served as University of Nebraska librarian from 1898 to 1906 and as president of the Nebraska Library Association in 1899 and 1900. He left Nebraska to become reference librarian and vice-director of the New York State Library School, made famous by Melvil Dewey, and became director of the New York State Library in 1908.

Wyer’s committee delivered its report on June 22, 1917. It included estimates of the funding needed to supply books, libraries, equipment, and library personnel for the American troops in training in the United States and on duty overseas. The numbers grew steadily as the Department of War’s plans rose from sixteen to thirty-two and, ultimately, to forty cantonments.

President Wilson appointed Wyer chairman of the American Library Association’s War Service Committee, which operated under the War Department’s Commission on Training Camp Activities. Raymond B. Fosdick, confidant of Woodrow Wilson, the Rockefellers, and General John Pershing, chaired the commission.

On July 5, 1917, Wyer, Librarian of Congress Putnam, and Frank Hill, a Carnegie contact, lunched with James Bertram, Andrew Carnegie’s secretary, and R. A. Franks, treasurer of the Carnegie Corporation. Wyer and Putnam had come to ask for \$320,000 to build thirty-two libraries. Carnegie agreed on September 14, contingent upon the ALA raising an equal amount.

Edward L. Tilton, the architect who advised Carnegie on library buildings, produced plans for the thirty-two libraries, each measuring 40 by 120 feet, which could be built within ninety days. As construction costs rose, however, the dimensions shrank to 40 by 93 feet.<sup>4</sup>

On August 14, 1917, about one hundred ALA members met in Washington, and on August 23, Newton D. Baker, the secretary of war, authorized the ALA to “provide adequate library facilities in the thirty-two cantonments and National Guard training camps.” Baker appointed Frank A. Vanderlip, president of the City Bank of New York, to head the Library War Council and raise funds. Volunteers and stringent economy were required “so that every dollar that could possibly be saved for a book shall be applied to it.”<sup>5</sup>

The fund-raising drive would take place the last week of September 1917. Matthew S. Dudgeon of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission, a presidential appointee to the ALA’s War Service Committee and manager of the camp libraries, outlined the mission for the state librarians in early August 1917. In turn, Charlotte Templeton, executive secretary of the Nebraska Public Library Commission, wrote on August 31 to all Nebraska librarians and library board officials asking for their help in meeting the goals.

Assessments were based on population: Ponca and Wahoo would each raise \$100, Friend \$130, Clarks \$135, Merna \$134, Kearney \$650, and Beatrice \$936.

Many towns quickly met the challenge. On September 3 Templeton wrote to Mr. A. K. Atkinson of Merna, “Thank you for your prompt and cheerful acceptance of the Merna chairmanship to raise the war library fund.” Mrs. Pauline Frank of Kearney responded to Templeton’s plea, writing, “Will do all I can, as per request. Will write you results soon.” Lottie Klotz of Wahoo, secretary of the Saunders County Red Cross, wrote, “We have been raising funds constantly since the 1st of June, and are rather getting used to it now and trust to raise much more than you apportioned to our little town.” Many small towns exceeded their quotas.



**James I. Wyer, University  
of Nebraska Librarian.  
The Sombero, 1899**



Campaign poster. Library War Service, American Library Association. Private collection

In late September 1917 Templeton wrote Edith Tobitt, "I have come to the conclusion that money is the easiest thing to come by that there is just now, for with very little effort almost every place is raising more than their quota of the war libraries fund."

A committee of twenty-five young business and professional men from Lincoln's Commercial Club, "not connected in any way with library interests," raised \$2,500 in an afternoon without even canvassing the residential districts. "If you can't give a book, give the price of a book" was their slogan.

Contributions to a war effort by civilian organizations were nothing new. During the American Civil War the voluntary Christian Commission, a project of the YMCA, the Sanitary Commission, a volunteer group reluctantly made official by President Lincoln, and various other women's organizations provided humanitarian social services for soldiers. They cooked meals, wrapped

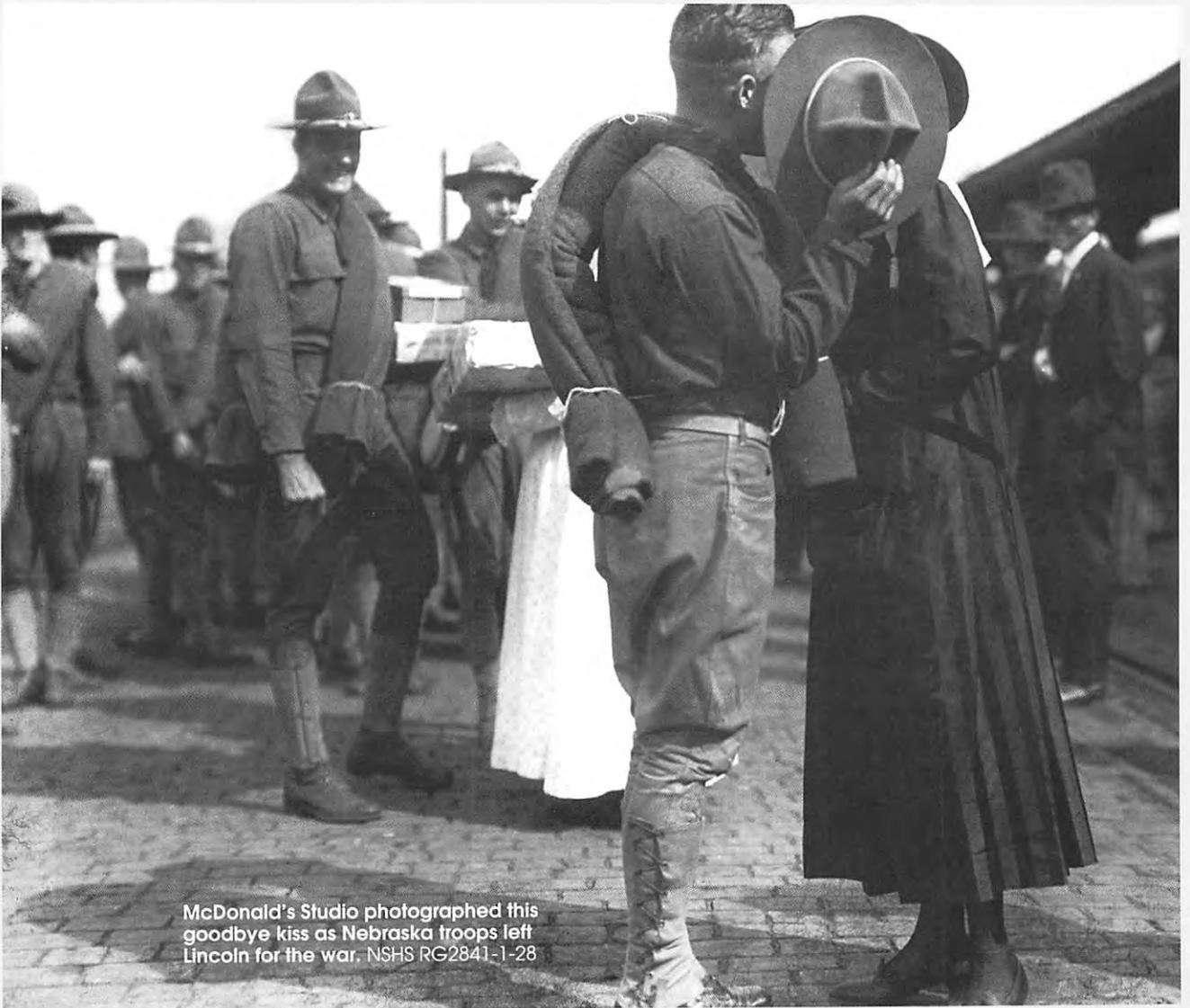
bandages, made packages of toiletries, and raised money. By the early twentieth century the YMCA exerted considerable moral authority and offered to provide library services to the troops. However, the YMCA declined "to conduct its work on a nonsectarian basis," and several other religious groups volunteered to provide library services to their own adherents. On April 9, 1917, the Jewish Welfare Board organized to serve the needs of Jews in the military, and the Knights of Columbus, founded in 1881, created the National Catholic War Council to serve Catholics in uniform.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of that tradition of civilian assistance to the military, not all Nebraska libraries responded positively to Templeton's request. Some said apologetically that they were too busy, "entirely unfitted...to solicit funds," or worn out by the Red Cross activities. Mrs. Glenn Babson of Seward wrote, "In the slang phrase of the day 'nothing doing.' I have sidetracked every other activity and am already giving my whole time to the service of 'Uncle Sam.' Until some one can devise a way to increase the number of hours in a day I can't possibly do any more." The overcommitted, like Mrs. Babson, often offered the names of others in the community who might respond positively.

Schuyler, Clarks, and Grand Island objected. The Schuyler Public Library Board said they did not "feel like taking it up now," and went on to explain that there was so much jealousy between the Colfax County towns of Schuyler and Howells that it was "impossible to get a new court house built." George Beardsley, a Clarks attorney, had touted Clarks as a "wideawake town" when applying for a Carnegie library gift, but in 1917 he thought building military libraries too costly and "essentially an impractical" scheme. "By the time such buildings could be built our men will be in France, and the thirty-two southern cities will reap the benefit of the expensive library building to be erected."

Templeton pointed out that the buildings were to be temporary, but even so, Clarks declined to contribute its \$135 quota. Grand Island "flatly refused to make a campaign because they did not

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McDonald's Studio photographed this goodbye kiss as Nebraska troops left Lincoln for the war. NSHS RG2841-1-28

see any use in books for soldiers who haven't time to read." The David City contact declared, "The town has been canvassed to death for money and I absolutely will not solicit funds for any library enterprise." Omaha (with a quota of \$15,000), Kearney, and Scottsbluff lagged in contributions.

Neighboring South Dakota exceeded its \$6,100 quota, contributing \$9,438. South Dakota was twenty-ninth in the dollar amount raised, while, according to the 1910 census, ranking thirty-fifth in population among the forty-eight states. Nebraska ranked twenty-eighth in money raised and twenty-sixth in population. Templeton probably would have concurred with William H. Powers's assessment of the South Dakota effort: "From a few counties nothing was heard. This failure to respond was probably due in most cases to failure to get the proper persons to push the campaign."<sup>7</sup>

While the planners expected to raise most of the money in large cities, "it was in the small communities that the fund received the most liberal support," and "few large cities reached their goal." Frank Hill, chairman of the ALA War Finance Committee, explained, "The reasons for this are easy to understand when we consider the complications of modern urban life and the difficulty of securing concerted action."<sup>8</sup>

Although he was writing about South Dakota, Powers made a veiled reference to another tension in the civilian population that may have applied to Nebraska as well: "Sections of different states cannot be depended upon to be loyal."<sup>9</sup>

Nebraska had a substantial German immigrant population. According to the November 1916 Nebraska Public Library Commission Biennial Report twenty-six traveling libraries contained a thousand

German books. In his autobiography, *Will's Boy: A Memoir*, Wright Morris, raised in Central City, recalled the Kaiser being hung in effigy in his hometown.<sup>10</sup>

University of Nebraska historian Fred Morrow Fling fulminated against neutrals and pro-Germans. Willa Cather records the existence of German-American disdain for civil authority in her 1922 Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *One of Ours*. And Nebraska nurtured a leading Supreme Court case, *Myer v. Nebraska*, in which a Hamilton County parochial school teacher who taught his students a bible story in German was convicted of violating a 1919 state statute prohibiting teachers from giving instruction in any language but English. The conviction was upheld in the Nebraska Supreme Court, but was reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1923 on constitutional grounds.

When Templeton asked Edith Tobitt to recommend an Omaha chairman Tobitt replied, "I would suggest Mr. Haller's name in this connection if he were not so much under fire at the present time for his supposed pro-German tendencies."

The American effort in "The Great War" relied on civilian contributions and large-scale, coordinated, national publicity campaigns. The American Library Association recommended solicitation through "Captains of Publicity" with teams representing newspapers, advertising firms, motion picture advertisers, and merchants' advertising men. They produced eye-catching posters and billboards and ear-catching phrases including the slogan "Knowledge Wins."

The War Council suggested soliciting support from commercial organizations, patriotic societies, churches, women's clubs, Red Cross chapters and other war-work organizations, the Boy Scouts, children's organizations, high schools, colleges, the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, YMHA, YWCA, fraternal organizations, the Grange, and other farmers' organizations.<sup>11</sup>

By the end of January 1918 Nebraska had given \$11,396; Iowa \$35,299; South Dakota \$9,438; Kansas \$8,166; Colorado \$19,537; and Wyoming \$4,443. New York gave the most, \$221,541; New Mexico gave the least, \$30.54.<sup>12</sup>

A sample of contributions from Nebraska cities and counties includes Alliance \$305, Beatrice \$238, Blair \$290, Central City \$251, College View \$239, Fairbury \$484, Hastings \$793, Lincoln \$2408, Madison County \$781, Neligh \$259, Shelton \$205, Thayer County \$207, and Wayne \$223. All but Central City had city or county Carnegie libraries.

The state also contributed a librarian to the war

effort. Like his older brother, James, Malcolm Glenn Wyer left a local post to contribute to the war effort on a national level. Malcolm studied at the University of Minnesota and the New York State Library School in Albany. He served as librarian for the University of Minnesota, Colorado College, the University of Iowa, and, from 1914 to 1924, for



**Public Library Poster, American Library Association.**  
*War Library Bulletin 1, May 1919*

the University of Nebraska.

He presided over the Nebraska Library Association in 1916–17, then took leave from the University of Nebraska in November 1917 to establish the library at Camp Logan, Texas, where he lived in a YMCA hut. In July 1918 he went to Washington,

D.C., to become assistant to Herbert Putnam, the Librarian of Congress.

The first national Library War Fund campaign exceeded its goal, raising \$1,727,554, with expenses of \$74,865, and announced its achievement with a poster captioned, "What Has Been Done." The patriotic spirit continued as more young men went into uniform.



Malcolm Wyer left the University of Nebraska Library to become assistant to the librarian of congress in Washington, D.C. Courtesy University of Nebraska Library, Archives and Special Collections

The statistics were impressive. By June 1918 the Library War Service had erected 36 camp libraries, 41 large camp libraries, and 91 hospitals and Red Cross houses. There were 212 librarians in the service, 237 small military camps and posts equipped with book collections, 249 naval and marine stations and vessels supplied with libraries, and 1,323 branches and stations housed in YMCA and Knights of Columbus huts, barracks, and mess halls. A total of 385,310 books had been shipped

overseas; 411,505 books, most of them technical, had been purchased; 2.1 million donated books were in service; and 5 million magazines were distributed systematically, including "Burlison magazines" which, by order of the postmaster general, were mailed without an address for one cent.<sup>13</sup>

Nebraska's 104 tax-supported public libraries provided the infrastructure for the state's participation in the national effort, and at least sixty contributed to the war effort. The Weeping Water librarian, for example, wrote to the director of the Committee of Public Information in Washington, D.C., "Will you please place our library on your mailing list? We wish to be of as much service as possible to the government."<sup>14</sup>

"Public libraries have served all sorts of patriotic causes," housing Food Administration offices, Councils of Defense, and the Red Cross. They distributed yarn and material for hospital garments, sold thrift stamps, and provided information on gardening, canning, and food conservation.

Circulation in some libraries declined, mainly in fiction, because patrons were "absorbed in war work." Reference work increased. Many public libraries kept "scrap books of clippings and card records of the men who have gone from the community into the service...a valuable contribution to local history." Library staffing suffered as librarians left for better paying positions.<sup>15</sup>

Towns and their libraries also donated books to the war cause. In 1918 the Bloomfield Public Library offered 90 books, the Central City Public Library 75, the Gering Woman's Club 128. The Campfire Girls of Union went door to door to collect 300 books. Volunteers pasted in bookplates, book cards and supplied by the ALA.

Red Cloud asked about donating old editions of textbooks, which Templeton rejected. North Platte shipped 56 books to Denver. Crawford had 15 *International Encyclopedias*, 40 *National Geographic* magazines, and 161 fiction and non-fiction books. They reported, "Our library is small, being just one room, and we would be glad if these books might be sent to some camp." Templeton responded, "The encyclopedias we can hardly use." North Bend asked where to send 53 books. David City asked who covered the cost of shipping, and Templeton offered to reimburse the library for the freight. Donors were instructed to "Please sort carefully. Eliminate all that you would not welcome for a live open-shelf collection in your own library." Books on cheap paper and those with old or unattractive bindings were unwelcome.



The drudgery of training at Camp Funston, Kansas, included laundry chores. NSHS RG2841-4-18

A second intensive book campaign held March 18–25, 1918, proclaimed, “More Books Needed for the Camp Libraries and for our Men Over There.” At least 3 million books were collected. Nebraska contributed 22,000 volumes, Iowa 93,123, Kansas, 29,052, Missouri 66,674, North Dakota 22,495, Oklahoma 10,657, South Dakota 20,462, and Wyoming 14,896. Omaha contributed 12,000 volumes, Denver 24,000, Des Moines 11,279, Kansas City 15,000, and St Louis 25,000. But even that impressive 3-million-volume collection could not satisfy the needs of the American Expeditionary Force.<sup>16</sup>

The boys in the camp wanted reading for distraction. Zane Grey led in popularity followed by Harold Bell Wright, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jack London, Rex Beach, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, O. Henry, Mark Twain, H. Rider Haggard, and Owen Wister. “Most of the men wanted a happy ending to their stories.” Regional authors and “stories of the localities from which the men came...also possessed an absorbing interest.”<sup>17</sup>

The Camp Logan, Texas, librarian found an

immediate need for good books (from five to fifteen copies of some titles) as well as “eight or ten good war atlases.” The most requested foreign language books were in Yiddish, Polish, and Italian. Troops in Europe could not get enough *Baedekers*, the leading travel guides. Boys’ books by the English writer George Alfred Henty, with energetic patriotic titles like *With Roberts to Pretoria* and *Up the Irrawaddy*, were scarce and highly sought after by “some very young soldiers, boys from remote ranches and border towns.” The librarian added, “Anything to get them into the habit.”<sup>18</sup>

Burton E. Stevenson, the Camp Sherman, Ohio, librarian, wrote in “Camp Libraries Help Win the War” that the libraries helped “maintain morale of the men by providing them with interesting and entertaining reading matter to help tide over the moments of loneliness and depression of the war, and make them realize that they are not fighting France’s fight, England’s fight, or Italy’s fight, but America’s fight.”<sup>19</sup>

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"LIBRARIES HELPED MAINTAIN MORALE OF THE MEN BY PROVIDING THEM WITH INTERESTING AND ENTERTAINING READING MATTER TO HELP TIDE OVER THE MOMENTS OF LONELINESS AND DEPRESSION OF THE WAR."

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In Nebraska soldiers were stationed at Fort Crook, Fort Omaha, and Fort Robinson. A 500-volume YMCA traveling library met Fort Crook's reading needs. The Omaha Public Library served Fort Omaha, the site of aviation training, with three-times-per-week delivery. The YWCA and local libraries served men guarding the bridges across the Missouri River. Templeton asked the editor of the *Lincoln Daily Star* to donate copies for sixteen weeks to Camp Cody, New Mexico, and Camp Funston, Kansas, "where the majority of our Nebraska boys are."

Mrs. Elizabeth O'Linn-Smith of Chadron felt that "Chadron has been solicited to death." Seven members attended the library board meeting "and not one thought we ought to ask Chadron people for money." Nonetheless, Smith managed to raise her enthusiasm. As Chadron's librarian and local Red Cross chairman she took intense interest in Fort Robinson, 28 miles away. "I will go whenever I am needed," she wrote, "and know I shall be received with open arms (as it were)."

Through most of the war years the fort was manned only by a caretaker force and, for occasional short periods, by other detachments. In May 1918, however, the War Department announced that a battalion of U.S. Guards, composed of men ineligible for the draft or overseas duty, would be trained there, then sent to relieve first line troops guarding utilities, shipyards, arsenals, and the like.<sup>20</sup> Major Pole heartily approved establishing a reading library in the Post Exchange building.

Fort Robinson received five hundred volumes



of fiction, and more were needed as up to 600 more Guards were expected to join the 450 officers and enlisted men of the battalion. The additional troops never arrived, but for the two months the Fifth Battalion was there the small, isolated post offered the men few of the amusements available in larger camps. The library and its magazines were "specially appreciated." One Friday evening Elizabeth O'Linn-Smith brought "a little home talent play and some musical numbers" and reported, "you cannot imagine how pleased they all were." Mrs. Smith "furnished every train of soldiers passing through Chadron with reading matter sufficient for their use while en route."

In July 1918, the American Library Association planned another campaign to raise three million dollars for soldiers' libraries. Templeton scheduled a committee meeting of leading librarians for Labor Day.

July and August 1918 were very hot in Washington, and Malcolm Wyer, on leave from the University of Nebraska Library and newly arrived in Washington from Camp Logan, wrote on July 24, "Real Nebraska weather here this week & it makes me glad that it has been so cool this far." But on August 8 he reported, "The thermometer here



registered 114 yesterday, the hottest day for 47 years—so we can beat your 112.” He considered resigning from the Nebraska Library Commission as he thought it probable that he would not return to his work in Lincoln for several months.

At the Nebraska Library Association’s 1917 annual meeting in Kearney, Wisconsin’s Matthew Dudgeon talked about the War Service Committee. Mr. Joy E. Morgan, a Nebraskan and Camp MacArthur, Texas, librarian, welcomed the opportunity to address the 1918 meeting in Lincoln adding, “After months of this continuous [Texas] heat and drouth—no rain since June—a little bit of Nebraska would look good to me.” He would “be glad to speak of the work being done in a camp by other organizations, being quite familiar at the first hand with them all.”

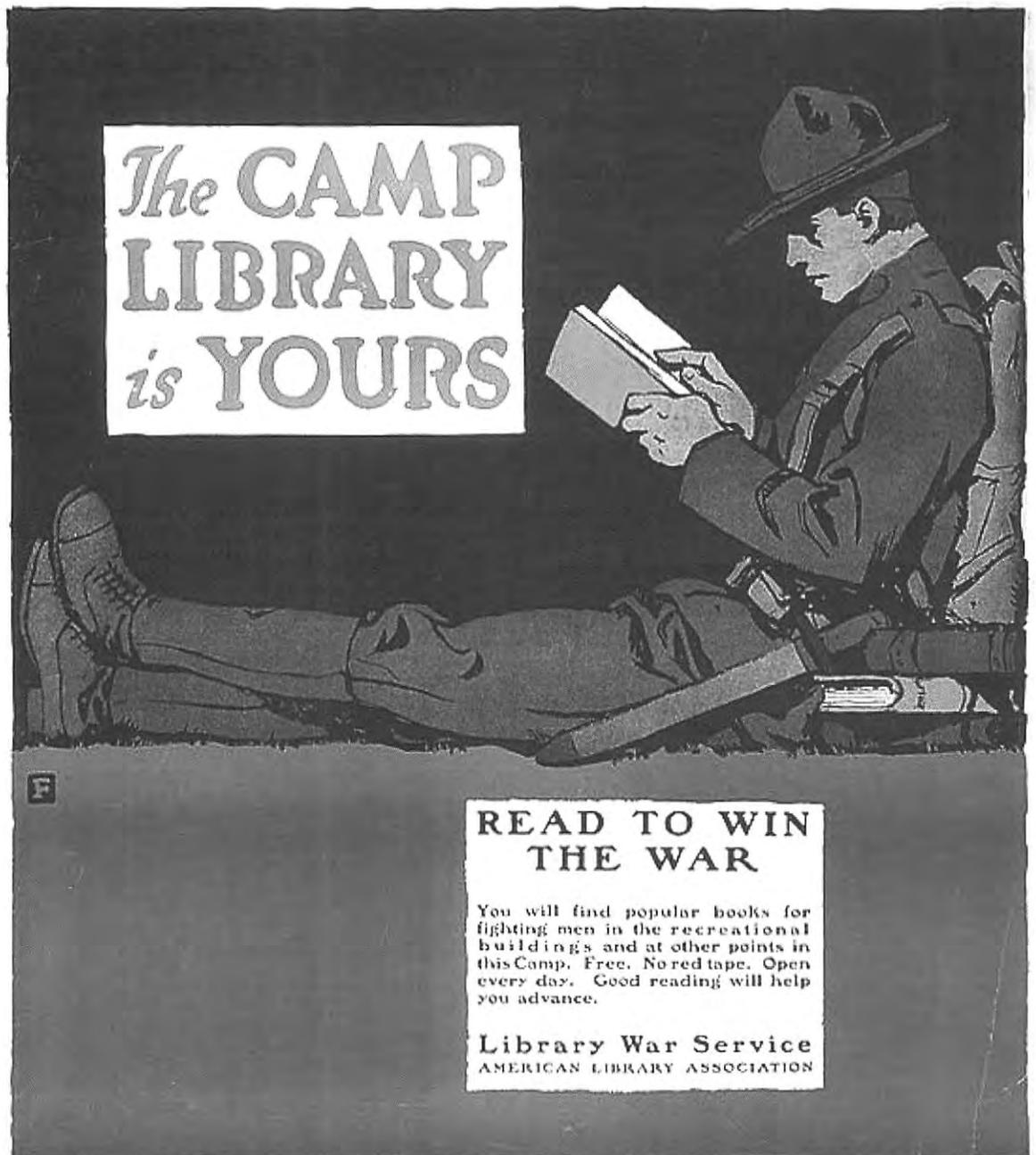
To avoid duplication, competition, and simultaneous charitable drives, the United War Campaign combined camp and army welfare work into a single drive set for November 11–18 after the completion of the Liberty Loan Drive. The November campaign coordinated seven national causes: the National War Work Council of the YMCA, War Work Council of the YWCA, National Catholic War Council (Knights of Columbus), Jewish Welfare

Board, War Camp Community Service, Salvation Army, and the American Library Association’s Library War Service.

Nebraska’s share of the \$170.5 million goal was \$2 million. On October 11, 1918, the United War Work Campaign office in Chicago announced an intensive speaking campaign: Beginning in October twenty representatives would address forty thousand meetings. Among the more active speakers in Nebraska were Beatrice’s John A. Kees of F. O. Kees Manufacturing Company and the father of poet Weldon Kees; Father Carey of Fairbury; Rabbi Jacob Simon of Lincoln; and Miss Anna V. Jennings of Kearney State Normal School (now the University of Nebraska at Kearney). Finding representatives from all seven of the voluntary agencies in Nebraska’s twenty districts sometimes proved difficult. Seward reported, “We have no one representing the Salvation Army or the Jewish organization” for the scheduled October 23 meeting.

Books and libraries educated and entertained. The Library War Service wanted to provide “the fighting man the book that helps him to be a better fighter and a better American.” The ALA reported that 41 camp library buildings were in operation,

In France Nebraska troops traded the relative luxury of stateside training for the chaos of a tent encampment. NSHS RG2B41-12-2



The promotion of reading—and more than three million books—followed the troops to the war in Europe. Library of Congress LC-USZC4-10022

over 40 large libraries had been established, and books were supplied to 140 hospital and Red Cross houses, 315 small camp libraries, and 406 Naval and Marine libraries managed by 243 librarians. The Library War Service had purchased 600,000 books, 1 million had been shipped overseas, 3 million gift books had been placed in service, and 5 million magazines had been distributed.

General John J. Pershing, commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces and former military instructor at the University of Nebraska,

asked for 100,000 books per month to keep up the morale of the army and assisted the library program by granting franking privileges.

As the war wound down recruiting stations closed. On October 21, 1918, the Library War Service announced that overseas book shipments, formerly transported by the Quartermaster General's Office were "temporarily suspended." On November 7, 1918, Templeton asked Milan for five thousand bookplates for soldiers' gift books. Maggie E. Long, secretary of the American Red

Cross in Madison, Nebraska, complained that posters and other publicity material had not arrived. At the bottom of her typewritten letter she wrote in longhand, "I am learning to use my Corona typewriter."<sup>21</sup> Templeton responded, "I think the Y.M.C.A. was a little too sure of its organization but believe that it will come out all right eventually."

In October the Spanish flu further disrupted American life. Schools, theaters, and libraries closed. Quarantines were established. Charlotte

cross in Madison, Nebraska, complained that posters and other publicity material had not arrived. At the bottom of her typewritten letter she wrote in longhand, "I am learning to use my Corona typewriter."<sup>21</sup> Templeton responded, "I think the Y.M.C.A. was a little too sure of its organization but believe that it will come out all right eventually."

In the immediate postwar period the American Library Association continued to address the reading needs of returning servicemen, many of them in need of rehabilitation. The association published *Books on Subjects Taught in Reconstruction Hospitals*<sup>24</sup> and *Your Job Back Home: A Book For Men Leaving the Service* (1919). Billboards and posters emphasized the reintegration of demobilized soldiers, with slogans like "Back to the Job."



Libraries continued to promote their services as soldiers returned after the war. *War Library Bulletin 1*, May 1919.

Templeton wrote Harry Dixon of North Platte on November 26, 1918, congratulating him on the "splendid results" of his district's campaign: "With the handicaps of the influenza epidemic and the declaration of peace, I think that your results are remarkably fine." Juliet M. Vore, director of the traveling libraries since October 1914, died of influenza on December 23, 1918.

The Armistice on November 11, 1918, did not stop the shipment of books. From January 1, 1918, through November 1918, about 1.2 million books were sent overseas, and an additional 1.3 million through April 1919.<sup>22</sup>

Eventually the war libraries were broken up and the books redistributed to the states. Of the 3,162 volumes that Nebraska received, 564 went to the Library Commission reference collection and the rest to the American Legion Posts, institutions, and public libraries. "Many of these books were bought by the American Library Association and they will be a valuable acquisition not only to the Commis-

In Des Moines a billboard on the library grounds opposite Interurban Station proclaimed "Prepare Now For the Job You Want. Your Public Library will lend you books on any subject—free. Come in and look'em over." Similar ads appeared in Detroit: "Are You Out of Work? Do You Want a Better Job? There are books on all kinds of trades and professions at the Detroit Public Library."<sup>25</sup> "A returned soldier's mother" wrote in February 1919 to the Blair, Nebraska, *Enterprise* asking if the city could "conduct an employment bureau... in our public library?"

General Pershing congratulated the ALA on April 18, 1919, for "without friction or waste... placing good reading matter at the disposal of every individual in the forces."<sup>26</sup>

Seven million books had been placed at the service of naval and military forces. Almost two million books had been purchased, generally at a 50 percent discount. While the Library of Congress staff declined from 415 to 189, the uniformed force

of the ALA War Service Committee stood at 717,350 women and 367 men.

James Wyer returned to his post in Albany and served as library director until his retirement in 1938. His brother, Malcolm Wyer, returned to his position at the University of Nebraska, but left in 1924 to become librarian of the Denver School of Librarianship. In 1919 Charlotte Templeton left Nebraska to work for the Georgia Library Commission.



NSHS RG 2841-4-17 (detail)

Willa Cather's 1922 Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *One of Ours*, is based on the war experiences of her cousin, a farmer and reader, killed in France. Still in print it attests to the power of libraries and Nebraska's place in world literature.<sup>27</sup> A decade after the war, a librarian reflected, "There was no question about its [the library's] value in developing efficiency and keeping up morale, which, according to Napoleon,

is three fourths of the strength of an army."<sup>28</sup> Carl H. Milan, writing in 1931, observed, "Many of them [soldiers] discovered through the camp library, the joy of reading."<sup>29</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Templeton to Elizabeth Tobitt, Sept. 29, 1917, Nebraska Library Commission, RG16, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln. This article relies heavily on Library Commission records, and otherwise unattributed material, including incidental quotations, are from that source.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Librarian of Congress* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Histories of the American Library Association's contribution to the war include: Theodore Wesley Koch, *Books in The War, The Romance of the Library War Service* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919); Dr. A. H. Shearer, "Historical Sketch of the Library War Service, June 1919 to January 1919," in *Report of the War Service Committee of the American Library Association for the year ending June 30, 1919* (Albany: 1919); Arthur P. Young, *Books for Sammies: The American Library Association and World War I* (Pittsburgh: Beta Phi Mu, 1981); and Wayne A. Wiegand, "An Active Instrument for Propaganda": *The American public library during World War I* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Oliver B. Pollak, *A State of Readers: Nebraska's Carnegie Libraries* (Lincoln: J & L Publishers, 2005). Fosdick assisted in the publication of *Keeping Our Fighters Fit for War and After* by Edward Frank Allen (New York: Century Co., 1918).

<sup>5</sup> "How the Money is Being Spent," *War Library Bulletin* 1 (Jan. 1918), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Young, *Books for Sammies*, 14. During the World War II many social services were coordinated by the United Service Organization (USO).

<sup>7</sup> William H. Powers, "South Dakota's Contribution to Library War Service," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 10 (1920), 249, 260.

<sup>8</sup> Frank P. Hill, and Emma V. Baldwin, "Story of the American

Library Association Campaign for \$1,000,000," in *Library Service for Soldiers and Sailors*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Powers, "South Dakota's Contribution," 262.

<sup>10</sup> Wright Morris, *Will's Boy: A Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 13.

<sup>11</sup> "Campaign Plan - A Summary," *War Library Bulletin* 1 (Feb. 1918), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Frank P. Hill, *Library Service for Soldiers and Sailors: The Story of the Million Dollar Campaign of the American Library Association* (n.p.: American Library Association, War Finance Committee, 1918), 12, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *War Library Bulletin* 1 (Apr. 1918), cover; *War Library Bulletin* 1 (June 1918), cover, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Grace Countryman to George Creel, June 3, 1918, Box 69 Series 3-A1, RG 63, National Archives, cited in Wiegand, *An Active Instrument*, 52, 150, n. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ninth Biennial Report of the Nebraska Public Library Commission, Secretary's Report, "Libraries and the War,"* (Lincoln: Kline Publishing, Nov. 1918), 3; "Women in the War Library Service of the A.L.A.," *War Work Bulletin* (Oct. 25, 1918), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Katherine Mayo, "That Damn Y," *A Record of Overseas Service* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 157; Allen, *Keeping Our Fighters Fit*, 92.

<sup>17</sup> Shearer, "Historical Sketch," 47.

<sup>18</sup> Theodore Wesley Koch, *War Services of the American Library Association* (Washington, D.C.: A.L.A. War Service and Library of Congress, 1918), 27; Frank Parker Stockbridge, broadside, "Good Stories from Camp and Trench."

<sup>19</sup> "Camp Libraries Help in the War," *War Library Bulletin* 1 (Jan. 1918): 1.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas R. Buecker, *Fort Robinson and the American Century 1900-1948* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2002) 22-23.

<sup>21</sup> Earlier, on September 14, 1918, Templeton wrote a postscript to Mrs. Smith, "How do like the spacing of my typewriter? Typewriter repairmen have become extinct." Library Commission Records, NSHS.

<sup>22</sup> "Overseas Shipments," *War Library Bulletin* 1 (May 1919), 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Tenth Biennial Report of the Nebraska Public Library Commission, Secretary's Report* (Lincoln: Nov. 1920), 14.

<sup>24</sup> American Library Association (Washington, D.C., Jan 1919). The 108-page mimeographed publication contains an alphabetical list of 138 subjects, Advertising through Wood Finishing.

<sup>25</sup> *War Library Bulletin* 1 (Mar. 1919): 4; Supplement to *WLB* 1 (May, 1919): 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Report of General John J. Pershing*, cabled to the Secretary of War, Nov. 20, 1918 and corrected Jan. 16, 1919; "Welfare of the Troops," p. 8; "The A.L.A. Overseas," *War Library Bulletin* 1 (May 1919): 2. Marshall Foch provided the Preface for Theodore Wesley Koch, *Les Livres a La Guerre* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1920).

<sup>27</sup> Steven Trout, *Memorial Fictions, Willa Cather and the First World War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> William F. Yust, "Rochester in the War Work of the American Library Association," reprinted from *World War Service Records of Rochester and Monroe County*, 3 (1930), 187.

<sup>29</sup> Carl H. Milan, "Missouri in the Library War Service," *The University of Missouri Bulletin* 32 (1931), Foreword.