Billy Krause

By Paul Rykken

"He was a generous-hearted man, fond of the fellowship of his friends, and he had many of them."[1]

Introduction

Looking east in downtown Black River Falls during the World War I era. A crowd as gathered outside the offices of the Badger State Banner.

It is one of those episodes from the city's past that quickly faded from view either because it was deemed unimportant or ran counter to the more satisfying narrative of wartime unity. It happened on Armistice Day, 1918 when "pandemonium reigned" in the lower city, and "even the dogs howled and pranced" through the downtown streets.[2] Ignoring admonitions against public gatherings due to the devastating flu epidemic, it was as if citizens in Wisconsin and across the country collectively exhaled, prompting jubilant parades and celebrations. After a frustrating false report of an Armistice on the Thursday prior, the Great War officially ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, forever marked for history.[3] And on this early fall day, amidst the chaotic and raucous celebration, a jeering crowd verbally and physically assaulted 47-year-old Wilhelm


Badger State Banner.

BLACK RIVER FALLS, JACKSON COUNTY, WIS., THURSDAY, NOV. 14, 1918

GREAT WAR COMES TO AN END

Celebration Was Held in This City Monday---Large Number of People Here---Speeches Made in Afternoon

The front page of the Badger State Banner heralded the ending of the Great War and described the celebration in the lower city.

Krause, a German immigrant and long-time city resident. Dragged from Pratt's bakery, forced to kneel and kiss the American flag, he was then pulled through Main Street in a casket behind a firetruck. Other local German Americans, "decent, industrious, upright, honorable men," including a local farmer and a member of the clergy, suffered similar humiliation alongside Krause.[4] And though vaguely chronicled in local papers, with more than a hint of embarrassment, both victims and perpetrators remained anonymous, their stories reduced to hearsay and oral history that faded over time.

In 2002 interviews, Bob Pratt and Ozzy Moe recalled Armistice Day as one of their earliest childhood memories.

The Armistice Day incident and Krause's identity first came to my attention in 2002 while researching the Depression's impact on our region. In separate interviews, Ozzy Moe and Bob Pratt, Black River Falls residents born in 1912 and 1914 respectively, named the Armistice Day celebration as a powerful childhood memory. Both recalled being part of the joyous and giddy festivities. And surprisingly, both recounted the story of the German baker – the humiliation and anguish of that moment – and further identified him as "Billy" Krause, using a nickname indicating familiarity. It was Bob, especially, who wistfully described Billy's tragic experience in some detail, perhaps because William Pratt, Bob's father, owned the bakery and employed Mr. Krause.[5] Bob tearfully recounted the flashbulb memory 85 years later.[6]

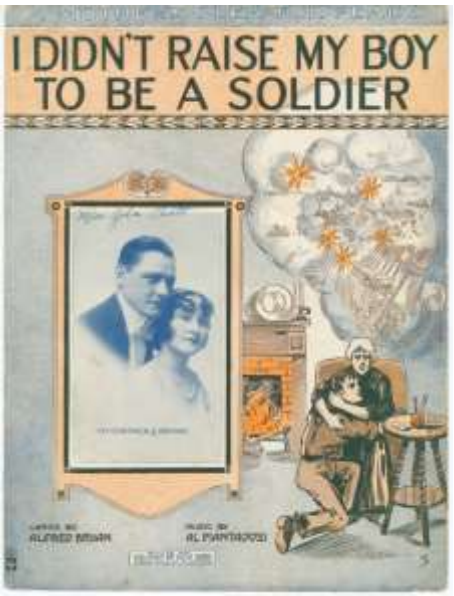
Billy Krause's personal story is unspectacular and not unlike millions of others who emigrated from Germany in the latter 19th century. Born in Markersdorf, Kries Gorlitz, Germany in May of 1871, he learned the baker's trade as a young man and completed service in the German Army. Arriving in America at age 31, Billy settled in Milwaukee. He was married for a brief time, then later divorced. Arriving in Black River Falls in 1905, he established a bakery in the small, bustling city. Within a few years, he sold the bakery to William Pratt and for a time moved to Iowa. In 1912, he returned and began many years of employment at the downtown bakery. He built a small home on the Black River north of the city in an area known as Clancy Hill and was an active member of several fraternal societies, including the Banner Lodge of Knights of Pythias and the Black River Lodge of Oddfellows, indicating an active sense of community service and philanthropy. He lived a simple life, and when he died peacefully in December of 1932, funeral

services were held at his home conducted within the traditions of the Knights of Pythias. Once and future Congressman Merlin Hull eulogized his friend, and the local press account of his passing reflected the sentiments of many: "The news of his death came as a blow to the many who had known him during the long years of his residence here and who esteemed him for his many excellent qualities."[7]

The experiences of Wilhelm Krause and others with German ancestry on that November day shake our modern sensibilities and were not unique to Black River Falls. As historian Richard Pifer aptly describes in his 2017 book, The Great War Comes to Wisconsin, such incidents happened across the state and revealed suspicions present in many communities prompted by the War.[8] The story of that xenophobic tension and overreaction is complex.

Wisconsin and the Outbreak of War

In our quest to arrive at attractively packaged historical narratives, we often ignore the intricacies of events including uncomfortable nuances. This is especially true regarding the experience of war and assumed public unity. Indeed, from our nation's founding, every war involving the United States prompted intense domestic political divisions. Many historians cite World War II as the exception, although the preliminary domestic debates of the 1930s concerning our potential involvement in a second European war were certainly divisive.[9]

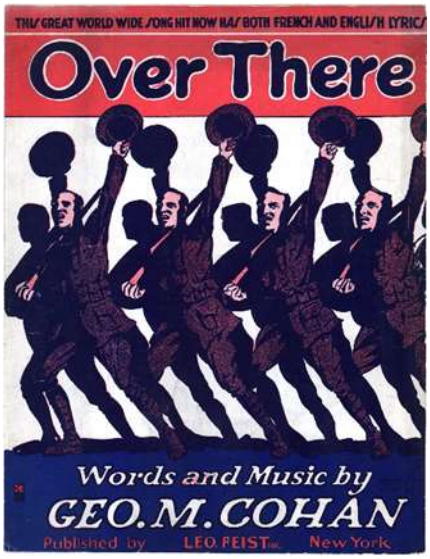


The Piantadosi and Bryan song reflected the feelings of neutrality shared by a high percentage of Americans in the opening year of the War.

Woodrow Wilson's 1916 Campaign Button

Unsurprisingly, when the "guns of August" shattered Europe's peace in 1914, reactions were mixed across the U.S. and Wisconsin. A century of limited involvement in European affairs meant most of the population was shocked by the outbreak of fighting. This was not our fight. The hit song by Al Piantadosi, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier," captured the widespread skepticism Americans had concerning the European War.[10] The

Wilson administration, accordingly, pledged neutrality, a reflection of the popular will, and a position that helped the President win reelection in 1916.[11] The neutrality did not last and several months into his second term, Wilson went before Congress seeking a formal declaration of war against Germany. Several factors prompted this action on his part, including the so-called "atrocity propaganda" related to Germany's invasion of Belgium (1914), the sinking of the Lusitania (May of 1915), the vested financial interests U.S. businesses and banks had with the Allied nations, especially Great Britain, the German use of unrestricted submarine warfare as a response to the British blockade, and the interception of the Zimmerman telegram by U.S. authorities and its publication in American newspapers (March 1917).[12] Wilson framed U.S. motives in lofty terms and soaring rhetoric in his war message to Congress. Arguing that our quarrel was not with the German people, Wilson directed his arguments at the government and leaders who violated the international order with their misguided actions. The solemn duty of the United States was to restore that order "over there" by aiding Great Britain and its allies. Initially elected as a domestic reformer with no foreign policy experience, Wilson's stunning transformation in early 1917 is on display in the most famous passage of his speech:



George Cohan's popular and patriotic 1917 song, notably performed by Nora Bayes, illustrates the changing attitudes within the public after the declaration of war..

> *It is a distressing and oppressive duty, Gentlemen of the Congress, which I have performed in thus addressing you. There are, it may be many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts,—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.*[13]

Wisconsin and the Loyalty Question

"Will Wisconsin be known when the war is over as the 'Traitor State?'"[14] *(Louisville-Courier Journal)*

German and British Propaganda posters from the Great War. Residents of Jackson County tracked events in Europe through several local papers that provided extensive weekly coverage.

Wisconsin's ethnic diversity posed a challenge for political leaders and average citizens as the Great War progressed. To what extent did immigrants or first-generation Americans harbor strong feelings of loyalty to their homeland? This question hung in the air in 1914 and beyond. German immigration to the Badger State began in the late 1840s and by 1890, 15 percent of state residents were German-born. By 1910, 38 percent of Wisconsin's 2.4 million people were either born in or had parents from Germany, Austria, or Hungary, those nations that would be at war against our future allies four years later. By contrast, 9 percent of the state's citizens had similar ties to those future allied nations (Great Britain, Canada, France, and Russia), and, unsurprisingly, sentiments about the European conflict destabilized communities across the state.[15]

Born in 1871, Wilhelm "Billy" Krause emigrated to Milwaukee in 1902 and arrived in Black River Falls in 1905. He was one of more than 1,800 Jackson County residents with direct German ancestry in 1910.

Jackson County's 17,075 residents presented a slightly different demographic picture. Thirty percent traced heritage to Norway or Sweden, an indication of the influence of Scandinavian (primarily Norwegian) immigration in the west-central region of the state. Nevertheless, 20 percent of county residents either emigrated from nations at war in Europe or were born to parents from those warring countries. Among that cohort, the German presence was most notable with more than 1,800 people either born in Germany or first-generation U.S. citizens with German parents, among them Wilhelm Krause who left his native land for America in 1902 at age 31.[16] And, perhaps surprising from our vantage point more than a century later, it was common to hear people speaking German in downtown Black River Falls in the early years of the century, along with Norwegian, Bohemian, Ho-

Chunk, and English. Such ethnic diversity was a notable feature in many upper midwestern communities.

The perception that Wisconsin citizens and political leaders had German sympathies and therefore a loyalty problem was no small matter and wound its way decisively into the state's internal politics throughout the wartime years. Several complex factors fostered this perception both in Wisconsin and beyond its borders. Most notably, reflecting statewide popular sentiment, Wisconsin's Congressional delegation (2 Senators and 11 House members), overwhelmingly rejected Wilson's call for war in April of 1917. Of the thirteen, only Senator Paul Husting and Representatives David Classon and Irvine Lenroot supported the Declaration of War. Robert LaFollette, Sr., the most formidable Wisconsin politician of the era, vociferously opposed the call for war against Germany. The LaFollette-Husting split, in many respects, clarified and defined pro and anti-war positions within the state, and continued throughout the war.[17] Nine of eleven House members joined "Fighting Bob" in rejecting the resolution, including 7th District Republican Congressman John Esch whose constituency included Jackson County residents. Esch served in the House from 1899-1921 and in 1916 garnered 68% of the county's vote, a sign of overwhelming popularity.[18] And though from opposing parties, his victory mirrored Wilson's national election and pledge of neutrality.[19] Interestingly, Wilson lost Wisconsin and Jackson County in 1916 to Republican Charles Evans Hughes, indicating both the strength of the party in the region and the reality that issues beyond the war infused the complex political environment. In addition to Wisconsin's antiwar congressional footprint, the state's active and outspoken Socialist Party, primarily centered in Milwaukee, opposed the war garnering negative national attention in the process. Finally, and unsurprising, German Americans in the Badger State were politically active and vocal during the lead-up to the war in their opposition to U.S. involvement.[20]

The tenor and tone of the political dialogue surrounding the war dramatically intensified in the early months of 1917 as it became clear that the Wilson Administration was moving closer to full-fledged support of Great Britain. There was a sense among many citizens and political leaders that Wisconsin must counter the charge of disloyalty and pro-Germanism.[21] Detractors of LaFollette and his outspoken opposition to US involvement, including fellow Senator Husting, succeeded in organizing the Wisconsin Defense League in March, just weeks ahead of the vote for war. Attracting more than 5,000 members by the end of April. with branches in all seventy-one of Wisconsin's counties, the League unabashedly promoted loyalty and patriotism, while stifling any

dissent. On April 6, 1917, just days after Wilson's call for war, the editors of the Wisconsin State Journal scathingly called out LaFollette: "Senator La Follette's speech at the opening of this Congress clearly defines him not as a peace-at-any-price advocate. It reveals his position to be decidedly pro-German (and) un-American. He must radically change that uncompromising pro-German attitude now that war is declared, or he will be aiding and abetting the enemy of the United States."[22]

It was in this politically charged atmosphere that Republican Governor Emanuel Philipp, in part, as a response to the formation of the Defense League, pushed for the creation of the State Council of Defense, the first organization of its kind in the nation. Under the direction of Magnus Swenson of Madison, the Council immediately began organizing county-level branches charged with coordinating home-front activities throughout the state. In early May, just weeks after the War Declaration, civic leaders gathered at the Jackson County Courthouse to organize a local Council of Defense. After a rousing extemporaneous speech by attorney George M. Perry, those gathered selected officers and formed more than a dozen committees indicating that "the citizens of Jackson County [would] be in line to do whatever suggests itself along the various lines of activity incident to carrying on the war in which the nation [was] now embarked."[23] In an indication of the intensity to which citizens would be called upon to support the war effort, George Cooper, publisher of the Badger State Banner, opined in glowing terms about America's transformation from reluctant observer to full-fledge participant:

> *What is this thing that has caused such a marvelous rallying to the flag, set footsteps to marching in every city and hamlet in the land, hushed the voice of the critic and electrified the nation in a thrilling call to arms? In a word, it is the specter of Kaiserism, sinister and merciless, obsessed with the chimera of world dominance. . . To be an instrument in the righting of wrongs is the apparent destiny of America. . . whatever our destiny, the American people are ready to make the sacrifice, not for gold or conquest but that the people of all nations may have a larger measure of liberty, justice, and equality. That she may emerge from the conflict with added luster to the starry emblem which she bears aloft is the fondest wish of every loyal patriot.*[24]

Cooper's framing of the moment provides a window into the important work of shaping public opinion brought on by U.S. involvement in Europe. Most notably, such work was carried out under the umbrella of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) guided by journalist George Creel. Increasingly, the use of newspapers, film, posters, and speakers focused public attention on the war. One such example was the

so-called "Four-Minute Men" organized by Creel. 75,000 speakers fanned out across the nation offering up short, inspirational speeches in movie theaters and public gatherings. It is estimated that more than 5,000 such orations were delivered throughout Wisconsin during the war.[25]

Produced by the Committee for Public Information, James Montgomery Flagg's iconic recruiting poster first appeared in 1916 and was adopted by the U.S. Army after the declaration of war in 1917.

Mobilization for the war effort moved quickly from rhetoric to action, and the most pressing challenge for the U.S. government was raising an army. Great debates ensued about the best approach, with Wilson calling for a national draft. The Selective Service Act of 1917 became law on May 18 and was in effect until November 11, 1918. At the time of its passage, the Regular Army had fewer than 100,000 soldiers, and the National Guard numbered around 115,000, woefully small numbers. By the end of the war, 4.8 million soldiers had served, and 2.8 million of them had been drafted into service, a high success rate for conscription. More than 122,000 Wisconsin men served during the war, with 4,000 killed. Commended for their efficiency by the Army, Wisconsin leaders enthusiastically embraced the conscription process. As was the case across the nation, appeals to patriotism and duty became the order of the day, a message brought home in myriad ways. Black River Falls' Badger State Banner inundated readers with articles and advertisements echoing the call to service, including front page lists of young men who rose to the challenge. Hundreds of young men from Jackson County served in the Great War, most notably as part of Company C, 107th Ammunition Train of the Wisconsin National Guard.[26]

Beyond building a fighting force, the federal government needed to finance the war effort, a massive undertaking. Beginning in the summer of 1917, the US Treasury Department organized four bond issues or "Liberty Loan" drives, a collective effort promoted by local banks and other businesses throughout communities across the country. Described as the "greatest advertising effort ever conducted," the drives eventually raised more than $17 billion, and more than twenty million individuals purchased bonds, an astonishing number.[27] Accordingly, Black River Falls

Numerous advertisements of this kind appeared in the Badger State Banner during the war. Pratt owned and operated the bakery and hired Wilhelm Krause as a baker in the early 1900s.

residents became accustomed to seeing such appeals enthusiastically embraced by local business leaders who used patriotism to admonish citizens about supporting the war effort.

By the early months of 1917 and into the summer, communities like Black River Falls began experiencing the European war that heretofore seemed remote. The war permeated international, national, and local news, while civic organizations and local businesses embraced the great cause. Young men lined up for duty and went off to Texas for training before departing for Europe and "letters home from soldiers" became a regular feature in local papers. It was a grand and serious adventure with no room for dissent.

The Ethos of Super Patriotism

> *Let us lay aside all of our differences, all of our sympathies, all of our prejudices, so far as they relate to other countries, and let us think and speak and act solely with regard to the good of our own country.*[28]
>
> *Senator Paul Husting*

In his war message of early April 1917, President Wilson proclaimed that disloyalty would "be dealt with a firm hand of stern repression." Fears of foreign espionage were palpable. Indeed, discussions ensued within the administration regarding the potential internment of the more than 500,000 German "aliens" in the United States. Ultimately deemed too intrusive and impractical, Wilson drafted a series of restrictions aimed at non-naturalized German males over thirteen.[29] Wilson's initial restrictions included bans on gun ownership and operating a radio or aircraft. He also gave law enforcement permission to arrest German Americans suspected of aiding the enemy. Adding further restrictions in November of 1917, Wilson ordered all non-naturalized German males over the age of thirteen to formally register as "alien enemies."[30]

Though understandable considering the sense of foreboding within the population, such far-reaching restrictions appear to border on paranoia.

In addition to these actions by the President, Congress passed the Espionage Act on June 15, 1917, one of the most restrictive laws of its kind in our history. In short, the law "prohibited obtaining information, recording pictures, or copying descriptions of any information relating to the national defense with the intent or reason to believe that the information may be used for the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation."[31] Further amended in September of 1918, the enhanced statute essentially outlawed expressions or actions deemed to be critical of the war effort, the government, or the American flag. Ninety Wisconsinites were indicted under the law during the war, most frequently for criticizing the United States or praising Germany.[32]

The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion badge that members would have used for identification purposes during World War I.

Much of the extreme patriotism and hyper-vigilance in Wisconsin at this time resulted from the public perception that Wisconsin's population made it particularly susceptible to German disloyalty. An example that appears especially extreme in hindsight was the formation of the Loyalty Legion of Wisconsin in September 1917. A successor to the Wisconsin Defense League established before Congress declared war, members of the Loyalty Legion defined their primary goal as "a broad and vigorous American patriotism" promoted through "patriotic education."[33] Walter Goodland, the Legion's executive secretary (and future Governor of Wisconsin), made it clear that every effort would be made to identify those disloyal to the war effort, and particularly warned patriotic German-Americans to distance themselves from "citizens of German blood . . . disloyal in their words and actions."[34] Goodland eventually resigned his post in protest over the Legion's ties to the overzealous American Protective League (APL). The APL, formed in 1917, enlisted citizens to act as informants within their communities and operated under the purview of the Federal Department of Justice


Walter Goodland (1862-1947), civic leader, newspaper editor, and 31st Governor of Wisconsin, was active with the Loyalty Legion during the war years.

and the Bureau of Investigation, a precursor to the FBI. The Loyalty Legion was especially aggressive in promoting patriotic education within the state's citizenry. Beyond the dissemination of literature, Legion officials promoted statewide speaking tours, enlisting a wide range of professionals in the effort. Though the Legion attempted to forge strong ties with the State Council of Defense, Governor Philipp resisted such overtures.[35]

By the fall of 1917, an atmosphere of super-patriotism imbued Wisconsin's complex political landscape. With mid-term elections a year away, the war took center stage, further energized by the tragic death of Senator Paul Husting. Accidentally shot by his brother Gustav while duck hunting on Lake Pickett near Green Bay, Husting, had been open in his opposition to LaFollette and others who resisted calls for American involvement in the European war. Governor Philipp initially announced that he would appoint a successor to Husting but relented to political opponents who called for a special election to be held in April of 1918. Three candidates emerged: Republican Irvine Lenroot, Democrat Joseph Davies, and Socialist Victor Berger. Hailing from Superior, Lenroot represented the 11th District of Wisconsin in the U.S. House of Representatives. As one of only two of Wisconsin's nine House members that voted in favor of the War Declaration, Lenroot positioned himself as the "loyalty candidate." The final tally in April showed Lenroot with 39%, Davies at 35%, and Berger at 26%[36]. Notably, in Jackson County, Lenroot garnered 64% of the vote – again, a sign of the strength of the Republican Party in west-central Wisconsin during that era.

Posters of this variety appeared on college campuses in Wisconsin in the spring of 1918.

While organizations like the Loyalty Legion operated openly and within the law, the suspicious impulses fostering its formation found expression in horrific acts against German Americans, and those in sympathy with them. Extremism was always just around the corner. A Northland College professor with German heritage, for example, was abducted, stripped, tarred, and feathered by a group of vigilantes calling themselves the "Loyal Knights of Liberty."[37] Though the victim reported the crime, law enforcement officers never brought charges against the perpetrators. The most notorious and tragic instance of mob justice driven by hysteria occurred in Clark County in September 1918, just two months before the Armistice. The widow of Ludwig

Krueger, Caroline, operated a farm south of Withee with her four sons, three of whom refused to register for the draft. Originally a devout Congregationalist, Caroline became swayed by the teachings of Charles T. Russell, including a strong rejection of war and military service.[38] Federal and state officials, accompanied by a posse of 150 men, approached the farm on September 14th to arrest the young men. A chaotic shoot-out ensued, resulting in the death of Harry Jensen, a Withee station master. Subsequently, two of Caroline's sons, Leslie and Frank, were charged with murder and sentenced to life in prison, later to be pardoned. Ennis, a younger son died in a shoot-out during the mayhem.[39] What began as one faithful woman's expression of conscientious objection to the fighting in Europe ended in tragedy.

George Milton Perry and the Voice of Conscience

By the time U.S. soldiers began sailing off to Europe in 1917, Wisconsin's cultural and political landscape had dramatically changed, a fact well-documented in the historical record. German Americans faced hostility on several fronts. Crowds harassed them and vandalized their property (including painting homes and churches yellow as a sign of cowardice and disloyalty), advertisers pulled revenue from German-language newspapers which led to closures, and schools pressured children to sign oaths denouncing the German language.[40] And though certainly aware of this changing landscape, Billy Krause could not have predicted his unfortunate experience on that cold November day in 1918.

Billy Krause was a familiar face to community members as they shopped at Pratt's Bakery in the busy downtown.

As heretofore mentioned, local press coverage of the Armistice Day celebration briefly mentioned local ruffians and their bullying behavior visited upon Billy and others that day, and names of both perpetrators and victims were left out of the reporting. Further, we have no

record of Billy's reaction, but it is hard to imagine he was not shaken by the events. Did bystanders simply look on, or did someone intervene on his behalf? The record is unclear. Nevertheless, three days later, a voice of conscience emerged in the person of George Milton Perry, a local attorney, and civic leader. In a lengthy article on the front page of the Badger State Banner, Perry scolded local citizens who participated in the hazing and recounted exchanges with observers who sanctioned terrible behavior due to vicious rumors and innuendo regarding the victims. In denouncing those who sought to humiliate others deemed to be "pro-German," Perry vociferously defended the character of the victims, calling for the triumph of reason over passion.

George Milton Perry (1848-1922)

Better known as "Milt," G.M. Perry's personal story and stature in the community afforded him the ability to admonish his fellow citizens in the local paper. Born in 1848 south of the city near "Perry's Creek," his life story is impressive. The oldest son of early pioneers James and Lydia Perry, young George had been on his own since age 14. At 16, he enlisted in the Union Army as part of the 42nd Wisconsin Infantry and saw action in the Shenandoah Valley in several major battles, including the horrific events surrounding Petersburg. Returning to Wisconsin in June of 1865, the experiences of the war marked him for the remainder of his life. Assuming the life of a farmer and schoolteacher in the town of Manchester in Jackson County, Perry married Nellie Martin in 1871. In 1877, he was elected to the County Clerk of Court position and began training to enter the bar. In 1880, Governor William Smith appointed Perry as County Judge to fill the vacancy created by the death of Judge Mark Bump. Over time, he built up a strong law practice in the community and beyond and was twice elected mayor of the city. Local citizens grew accustomed to his oratory at civic events, especially those involving veterans. The aging Civil War veteran occasionally regaled students at Union High School with stories of his service. Upon his death in 1922, many tributes appeared in the local papers, including the following: "He was a sympathetic nature of unusual fervor. He would go to most any length to accommodate a friend or help one in trouble or distress. He was liberal to such an

extent as to be considered almost a fault – a fault in behalf of his own interests; and he was always in the foreground in giving to worthy public causes."[41]

G.M. Perry's motivations in defending the Armistice Day victims seem straightforward enough and consistent with his public persona: unjust treatment of fellow citizens must not be tolerated. In fact, throughout the lead-up to the war and beyond, Perry championed the notion of free speech during wartime, a plea also voiced by Senator LaFollette. After Congress declared war on Germany in April 1917, Perry penned a defense of free speech that appeared in the local paper. Citing his service alongside German immigrants during the Civil War, providing specific stories of gallant service by notable comrades, he noted with great disappointment criticisms being leveled by local people against "patriotic men of German extraction." Further, he reminded community members of the Free Speech Clause of the Constitution and suggested that "some of our citizens become so excited and overzealous they forget that our country is a republic and not a monarchy – that the freedom of speech and press is inviolate under the Constitution." Perry compared the plight of those facing abuse in 1917 to that of the abolitionists of the antebellum period, and he concluded his well-constructed editorial by suggesting that branding Germans as traitors will only harm the essential cause of unity going forward.[42]

A year later, Perry again defended German Americans in Wisconsin. In this instance, he decried the yellow painting of barns and houses perpetrated by vandals seeking to accuse others of disloyalty. He further warned that mob law of this kind would create hatred and disrespect for our nation among our German neighbors. "So let us not repeat, support or countenance this lawless, unpatriotic spirit, this total disregard of the Golden Rule, this mistaken idea of real and true patriotism and apply some other methods of reaching their better judgment and inspiring them with a respect and love of the country in which they dwell that nothing can erase or dispel." And, once again, the 70-year-old Perry referenced his own Civil War service and the fact that comrades had "fought, bled and died for the establishment of this government and the freedom that we enjoy."[43]

Epilogue

The war demonstrated the frightening fragility of civil liberties.[44]
-- Richard L. Pifer

Though a subtle and persistent presence in the lives of average people, the daily blur of international events often remains "off-screen" for citizens in a small midwestern community. War has the power to change that reality by catapulting young people to foreign battlefields, connecting them to grander schemes, and bringing the world crashing into the community's collective consciousness. This has been true in Black River Falls starting, most notably, with the Civil War and continuing into the present period. Of all major conflicts, the Great War proved especially complex for many county residents. The pre-1917 US ambivalence toward the European conflict gave way to cries for unity and patriotism that often appealed to the worst impulses in human nature.

In Mark Twain's unusual novel, The Mysterious Stranger, written intermittently over many years, the narrator posits these haunting lines concerning the nature of war: "Before long you will see this curious thing: the speakers stoned from the platform, and free speech strangled by hordes of furious men who in their secret hearts are still at one with those stoned speakers–as earlier–but do not dare say so. And now the whole nation–pulpit and all–will take up the war cry, and shout itself hoarse, and mob any honest man who ventures to open his mouth; and presently such mouths will cease to open."[45] Indeed, fear and suspicion remain powerful motivators. Across Wisconsin, and indeed in our community, loyal, kind, and decent people like Billy Krause, faced humiliation during an otherwise celebratory moment in our history. And while G.M. Perry's appeal to the "better angels of our nature" provides us with some sense of redemption, we are challenged all these years later to reflect on what was forever lost.[46]

Wilhelm Krause's marker at Riverside Cemetery in Black River Falls

Notes:

[1] "Obituary for William Krause." *The Banner Journal*, 28 Dec. 1932.
[2] Perry, George Milton. "G.M. Perry Criticizes Wrong Act." *Badger State Banner*, 14 Nov. 1918, p. 1.
[3] The so-called "False Armistice" occurred on 7 November because of miscommunication within the French press which was then forwarded by American Naval Commander Henry B. Wilson to various news outlets. Wilson's actions prompted widespread criticism. For a fuller explanation, see Klein, Christopher. "The False WWI Armistice Report That Fooled America." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 7 Nov. 2018, https://www.history.com/news/false-armistice-report-world-war-i-early-celebration
[4] Perry, *Badger State Banner,* 14 November 1918.
[5] You can find the full interviews with Ozzy Moe and Bob Pratt included in the 2003 edition of the Falls History Project. "The Falls History Project: 2003 Edition: Black River Falls in the 1930s." Edited by Kristen R. Boehm and Paul ST Rykken, *The Falls History Project*, Black River Falls High School, https://fallshistoryproject.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/2003-standardized-2.pdf.
[6] The term "flashbulb memory" refers to a "highly vivid and detailed snapshot of a moment in which a consequential, surprising, and emotionally arousing piece of news was learned." Roger Brown and James Kulik introduced the term in their 1977 study of memory. https://www.simplypsychology.org/flashbulb-memory.html#:~:text=A%20flashbulb%20memory%20is%20a,piece%20of%20news%20was%20learned.
[7] *The Banner Journal,* 28 December 1932.
[8] Pifer, Richard L., and Marjorie Hannon Pifer. "Chapter 5: Politics on the Home Front." *The Great War Comes to Wisconsin: Sacrifice, Patriotism, and Free Speech in a Time of Crisis*, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, Madison, WI, 2017.
[9] Samet, Elizabeth D. Looking for the Good War: American Amnesia and the Violent Pursuit of Happiness. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2021. Samet argues convincingly that we have over-simplified our view of World War II as being the "good war," devoid of divisions.
[10] "'I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier': Singing against the War." *HISTORY MATTERS - The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4942.
[11] Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776*. Oxford University Press, 2011, 398-99. In one of the great ironies of our history, Wilson, who was elected primarily as a domestic reformer with no foreign policy experience, ended up being dramatically embroiled in foreign affairs.
[12] Christopher, Chris. "5 Reasons the United States Entered the First World War." *The Doughboy Foundation*, https://www.doughboy.org/index.php/news/208-5-reasons-the-united-states-entered-the-first-world-war?gclid=CjoKCQjw8amWBhCYARIsADqZJoXw-4TDuyIR_T4NDJoXTUmartFvC1mcL4bYDsLpvMADF-QW2kCr5FwaAhXNEALw_wcB. The reasons for US entry into World War I have been the subject of great debate for more than 100 years and are far beyond the scope of this article. Hering's *From Colony to Superpower*, provides an excellent analysis of the pre-War period and Wilson's actions, pp. 405-410.
[13] Woodrow Wilson. "War Message to Congress". Presidential Message, April 02, 1917. From Teaching American History. https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/war-message-to-congress/ (accessed July 12, 2022).
[14] Bellais, Leslie A. *Lest We Forget: Remembering World War I in Wisconsin, 1919-1945*, https://digitalcommons.mtu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=ww1cc-symposium
[15] Pifer, p. 23.
[16] "Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910." Statistics for Wisconsin, https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41033935v47-52ch2.pdf. Accessed 9 July 2022.
[17] Pifer, p. 65. For an in-depth look at the role that Senator Husting played throughout the period, see "The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, 1917-1918," by author Lorin Lee Cary, in The Wisconsin Magazine of History, Autumn, 1969, Volume 53, No. 1, pp. 33-50. Cary explores the unique coalition that formed throughout the war surrounding the loyalty question, including meat packer John Cudahy, motorcycle manufacturer Walter Davidson, and future Senator Irvine Lenroot.

[18] *State of Wisconsin Blue Book 1917*. Democrat Print. Co., 1917, p. 290. Esch won reelection in November of 1918, again by a wide margin.
[19] Though he won on a national level, Wilson garnered 42% of Wisconsin's popular vote and lost to Republican Charles Evans Hughes (49%). Wilson's share of Jackson County's vote in 1916 was 36%, reflecting the strength of the Republican Party in the 7th District.
[20] Bellais, p. 1.
[21] Cary, Lorin Lee. "The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, 1917-18." Wisconsin Historical Society Press, Sept. 1969, p. 33. Cary provides a thorough discussion of the Loyalty Legion's activities, especially regarding the politics of the wartime years.
[22] "Bob La Follette's Big Mistake -- State Journal Editorial from 100 Years Ago." *Wisconsin State Journal*, 8 Apr. 2017.
[23] "A Council of Defense." *Badger State Banner,* 10 May 1917, p. 1.
[24] "Americanism." Badger State Banner, 24 May 1917, p. 4.
[25] Keller, Paul Watson. "The Four-Minute Men." *University of Wisconsin*, 1940. Watson's 1940 thesis provides a thorough background on the formation of the Four-Minute Men and how they operated, including an insightful discussion of the deliberate use of propaganda in shaping public opinion.
[26] Vase, Dominic. "Black River Falls and the Great War." *The Falls History Project*, Black River Falls High School, May 2014, https://fallshistoryproject.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/2014-standardized.pdf. Vase's project is part of a collection that focuses on local history. He explored the role of Company C and provides an excellent overview of their story.
[27] Sutch, Richard. "Liberty Bonds." *Federal Reserve History*, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/liberty-bonds.
[28] Husting, Paul. "Some Letters of Paul O. Husting Concerning the Present Crisis." Wisconsin Historical Society, June 1918. Accessed 3 September 2022. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4630109.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Af54545d797609e6900f8f831297ac294&ab_segments=&origin=
[29] Grady, Lee. "America's 'Alien Enemies.'" The Wisconsin Magazine of History. Article available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26541163
[30] Grady, pp. 9-10. Grady offers an excellent discussion of the various restrictions and the impact they had on German immigrants, particularly in Wisconsin. Especially relevant is his extensive exploration of the actual registration process that ensued throughout the state and how it was administered. One can imagine the confusion such an order would cause in local jurisdictions.
[31] David Asp (Updated by Deborah Fisher in August 2022). "Espionage Act of 1917." *Espionage Act of 1917*, https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1045/espionage-act-of-1917#:~:text=The%20Espionage%20Act%20of%201917%20prohibited%20obtaining%20information%2C%20recording%20pictures,advantage%20of%20any%20foreign%20nation.
[32] Pifer, p. 192. The enhanced law was known as the Sedition Act of 1918.
[33] Cary, p. 38.
[34] Cary, p. 39
[35] Cary, p. 42.
[36] Beyond Lenroot's popularity, other factors weighed in his favor. The Democrat Joseph Davies had no legislative experience, and that hurt him during the campaign. Victor Berger, a powerful force within the Socialist Movement and decidedly anti-war, was under indictment for violating the Espionage Act. See Pifer for further discussion of the special election, pp. 227-229.
[37] Grady, p. 10.
[38] The followers of Russell are today known as Jehovah's Witnesses.
[39] The Krueger affair remains shrouded in mystery. Jerry Buss's 1998 book, A War of Their Own, offers a good analysis of the story. For a good summary of the case details, see "Krueger v. State, 171 Wis. 566 (1920) June 1, 1920 · Wisconsin Supreme Court 171 Wis. 566." *Caselaw Access Project*, Harvard Law School, https://cite.case.law/wis/171/566/.
[40] Wüstenbecker, Katja. "German-Americans during World War I." Immigrant Entrepreneurship, German Historical Institute, 22 Aug. 2018, https://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entries/german-americans-during-world-war-i/.

[41] O'Neill, James. "Obituary: Perry, George Milton (1848-1922)." Perry, George Milton (1848 - 1922), https://www.wiclarkcountyhistory.org/4data/89/89549.htm.
[42] G.M. Perry. "An Able Defense of Free Speech." The Badger State Banner, 19 April 1917.
[43] G.M. Perry. "Opposes Lynch Law." The Badger State Banner, 13 June 1918.
[44] Pifer, p. 3.
[45] Jensen, Carol. Loyalty as a Political Weapon: The 1918 Campaign in Minnesota. Minnesota Historical Society (Summer 1972), https://collections.mnhs.org/mnhistorymagazine/articles/43/v43i02p042-057.pdf.
[46] My reference here is to the closing line from Lincoln's First Inaugural of 4 March 1861. The full citation is, "I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Author Bio

Paul ST Rykken, MA, is a lecturer with the First Nations Studies Department at UW-Green Bay, teaching through the Virtual Academy. A graduate of Concordia College (Moorhead, MN), he retired in 2020 after 41 years of teaching high school in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. He initiated the Falls History Project and served as director for twenty years. He also contributes to Wisconsin First Nations, a website devoted to American Indian Studies. He and his wife Mary Beth reside in Black River Falls, Wisconsin.

A Note Concerning the Falls History Project and Acknowledgements

In July of 2001, I participated in a Gilder-Lehrman seminar at Amherst College in Massachusetts led by David Blight and Jim and Lois Horton. The idea for the Falls History Project was derived from that experience. Blight's admonition that, "History must be imagined before it can be understood," challenged me to consider how we could help young people and members of our community to reimagine local history by framing it within the broader context of the American story. A year later, we launched our first project, an exploration of World War II through the eyes of local veterans. In addition, I profiled the life of Mitchell Red Cloud, Jr., BRFHS graduate and Medal of Honor recipient from the Korean Conflict. Through 2022, we have completed 20 projects, had 23 interns, conducted more than 80 interviews, and produced more than 1,000 pages of archival material. From the start, we have enjoyed a great association with Mary Woods, Director of the Jackson County History Room. Her research assistance is invaluable! And thanks to my daughter, Kathryn Rykken Schweitz who lends her great editing skills to my articles, as she did with this one.

Our projects and corresponding articles are accessible on our website: fallshistoryproject.com.