

City Showed Patriotism, Loyalty in 1917 Conflict

During the First World War, Fall River displayed a high degree of patriotism and loyalty. With the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, 150 young men from the city volunteered to fight. Even before the war started, on April 1, the Fifth Deck, a division of the Massachusetts Naval Battalion, left in anticipation of the approaching German hostilities.

From 2,000 to 3,000 loyal Fall River citizens gave a gala send-off to the first of many detachments of troops to leave for foreign duty. A brass band led the parade to the station, playing "Good Bye, Good Luck, God Bless You" as the train pulled out of the city. The division was later stationed aboard the USS Kearsarge with Fall River men of the Eighth Deck Division.

Along with the large groups of drafted men to leave for the service, the citizens at home displayed a good deal of foresight during the war. On the day the war started, a group of men met to form the Committee on Preparedness under the chairmanship of Robert C. Davis, an organization which became a clearing house for the war effort in Fall River.

Mayor James H. Kay was chairman of the executive committee. Officers and members included: Vice President, Nathan Durfee; Secretary and Treasurer, Charles E. Smith; Thomas B. Bassett, William H. Beattie, Hector L. Belisle, Albert A. Harrison, Frederick W. Lawson and Russell A. Leonard.

Providence, Fall River and New Bedford provided a force of 1,500 men to be on hand for any emergency. A patrol was established for shore duty from Tiverton to Buzzards Bay, around New Bedford. About 20,000 men in the State enlisted in civilian defense duty in the coastal regions.

Frederick W. Lawson of the Board of Police was sent to New York to study the system of Commissioner Woods in civilian defense work. As a result of this survey, a gatling gun was purchased from the New York Police Department.

Area Is Protected

Measures like these, taken by the Committee on Preparedness, equipped the city and surrounding territory for adequate protection against any enemy attack from the water.

The Commission of Public Safety, appointed with the declaration of war, and the Council of National Defense, turned over their duties to the Committee on Preparedness which became the central organization for war activities.

Two military outfits of the Massachusetts militia were ordered out the day of the declaration. The Eighth Deck Division, under Lt. Clinton M. Smith, and the Third Engineers Division of the Naval Battalion were sent to the Boston Navy Yard. The Eighth Deck Division reported to the USS Kearsarge. The men of the Third Engineers Division saw service on American

ships which reinforced the British fleet in the North Sea.

Successors to the old Battery M, First Heavy Artillery, which saw service in the Spanish-American War, the Twelfth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, of the Massachusetts National Guard, was mobilized for duty at the State Armory on July 25, 1917.

Military Service Held

Given an early Summer fraternal send-off at the YMCA on July 23, where the roster of speakers included the Hon. Andrew J. Jennings, Mayor James H. Kay, former Lt. John T. Swift, Lt. E. A. Hearne, Maj. Harry A. Skinner, in command of the division, and Capt. Thomas J. Clifford, the division was also commemorated on the eve of its departure with a solemn military service at St. Mary's Cathedral. Rt. Rev. Monsignor James E. Cassidy, V.G., delivered a stirring address to the assembled company.

The division left for the station accompanied by the High School Battalion, the camp Doran USWV, Battery M, the Veterans' Association, and military officials.

Members of the company served overseas in the artillery units of the Yankee Division (26th Division). Maj. Skinner of the Coast Artillery Regiment, formerly captain of the Twelfth Company, commanded the battalion in the 55th and 56th Artillery Regiments overseas.

Parades Were Many

The citizens of Fall River held many parades for the departing military groups. On Sept. 8, 1917 one of the most memorable departures of the war occurred. Under the command of Col. William H. Beattie, 690 drafted men left for Camp Devens. Monsignor Cassidy and Col. Spencer Borden Sr. spoke at the farewell address.

Many large groups of drafted men left for Camp Devens. Out of the 10,547 registered in the draft, 3,650 claimed no exemption. Native-born citizens numbered 6,613, aliens, 3,829, and 10 alien enemies.

Local sons served in forts of the southern departments, radio and aviation schools, Plattsburg, Newport, New London, the regular service, naval reserves, the Coast Guard, Marines, heavy and field artilleries, the cavalry, infantry, and engineers. An American Expeditionary Force was organized during the war. A local naval militia was formed on April 7, 1917 as part of the Eighth Division.

State Guard Formed

With the absence of the National Guard, the city organized four companies in the 17th Regiment of the State Guard under Col. Beattie. Upon the return of the National Guard, the State Guard was disbanded.

Four drafts took many into the service. Under an amendment to the selective draft law, 14,485 men registered for the draft in September of 1918. Two months later the

was was over, and no more Fall River men were sent overseas.

The Committee on Preparedness took an active part in the enlistment campaign. Maj. William B. Squire of the Fall River Battalion attached to the 17th Regiment of the Massachusetts State Guard, mapped out a course of instruction for all young men in the city in the draft. Starting in May, 1918, the lessons were free of charge, dealing in matters of military tactics and company administration.

City Work Recognized

Robert R. Borden, enrollment agent for the U. S. Public Service Reserves, received a letter from Director William A. Gaston, saying that Fall River had done more for preparation than any other city in the State.

Five Liberty Loan campaigns raised a considerable sum in Fall River which went towards financing the war. A total of \$32,166,700 was amassed during the duration of the war. Other drives brought in a good deal of revenue. The Boy Scouts, Red Cross, Red Triangle, YMCA, and the United War work all helped in financing the cost of the war.

In each of the five drives Fall River exceeded its quota, receiving recognition from the National Liberty Loan committee by being presented the honor flag for exceeding the minimum allotment. Sufficient funds had been raised to send an army corps to France.

Women Aid Effort

The women of this city united under the Special Aid Society for American Preparedness on April 24, 1917 and zealously contributed to the war effort until the Armistice on Nov. 11, 1918.

Under organization leaders, Mrs. William Alexander of New York City, and Mrs. Barrett Wendell of Boston, 27 women, including representatives from the large women's organizations, met at the home of Miss Anna H. Borden, later elected president of the group, for the purpose of delivering "immediate service without red tape."

With an overall maximum membership of 602, the five departments of the organization—economic cookery, Red Cross institution, surgical dressings, hospital equipment, and girls training camps—contributed to the war effort.

Other Units Organized

Other women's organizations were formed: The Special Aid Society, the Women's Liberty Loan Committee, the Fall River unit of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense, the Catholic Women's Service League, formed with the assistance of the Knights of Columbus, the Red Cross, Fall River chapter, and the Junior Auxiliary.

Many religious orders and public school pupils contributed to the knitting departments of the organizations.

Red Cross Unit Formed

John L. Saltonstall, director of the New England division of the Red Cross, presided at a meeting of 17 citizens on April 4, 1917, in the Massasoit-Pocasset Bank building. The Fall River chapter of the Red Cross thus began, under the

direction of F. Stafford Mathewson.

By May, 17, 689 members were enrolled in the chapter. The executive committee held monthly meetings in the library. Mrs. Ellen A. Heathcote was chairman of work on surgical dressings done at the woman's Club. Mrs. Edward Newton gave out work for hospital garments, and Mrs. F. S. Mathewson supervised the work of the knitting department.

In the first War Fund Drive, the Red Cross raised \$49,000.

During the influenza epidemic of 1918 the Red Cross organized a nursing serve, with the Fall River Motor Corps under the direction of Miss Marion R. Thomas, captain, aiding in the charitable work. The Chapter Junior, organized in 55 schools, contributed \$4,093 to the Red Cross.

Meeting in Cherry and Webb's department store, the Junior Auxiliary was formed in October of 1917 under the direction of Harry Smalley. The Home Service Department and the Canteen Service, later taken over by the Red Cross, contributed to the work of the Jun-

ior Auxiliary. In the Belgium relief drive in April, 1918, 3,785 pounds of clothing were collected by the organization.

In cooperation with the public library the War Library Committee selected books for the servicemen.

Contribute to Fund

At the request of the secretaries of War and Navy, a War Camp Community was formed on Nov. 8, 1917. The proximity to Newport made Fall River an ideal location for a canteen to entertain the U.S. troops. A campaign for funds sent \$5,300 to the Washington headquarters.

Miss Rosamond Linnehan directed the activities of the Girls Patriotic League which sponsored community parties for the War Camp Community. The first gathering was held in Franklin Hall for a company of Marines stationed in Newport. About 400 servicemen attended.

With the signing of the Armistice on Nov. 11, 1918 the war emergency organizations disbanded.

Fall River gave ample proof of her patriotism. An estimated 5,000

men from this city served in the war. About 200 names are on the honor rolls in memoriam to the men who served and sacrificed themselves for the cause of American freedom.