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May We Remember How the Great War Changed the Practice and Ceremony of American Memorialization in Norfolk County, Massachusetts, 1868-1939

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Abstract

The emotional and psychological damage wrought by the Great War has long been rendered exceptional. The sheer numbers of dead and wounded coupled with new kinds of wounds – physical, emotional, psychological – perhaps justify this view. Yet in declaring that the Great War was a shock, a watershed, a tragedy, there is an implicit presupposition that some kind of precedent existed. As long as war had existed, so too did loss, grief, and mourning. The Great War did not introduce human sorrow to the world, though perhaps it altered human remembrance. When American families grieved their loved one, was it the same processes of mourning across time? When American communities faced a war, was it the same practices of memorialization, despite the varying kinds of warfare inflicted upon the nation? How did memorialization evolve to support the new and different ways to lose a soldier, to grieve a loved one, and to mourn as members of a modern world?

Although there have been studies on American memorialization, this work aims to study American memorialization's evolution distinctly due to the impact of the Great War. In that study, this research analyzes the implementation of national action to local interpretation by closely examining one New England community, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. From the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, this research tracks small town memorialization from its origins post-American Civil War, its evolution during the Great War, and it postwar revitalization as communities grappled with the loss of life in a war fought overseas. Drawing on research from local historical archives, the project offers an original and untold narrative of war, memorialization, and local history.

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Class of 2023

Dedication & Acknowledgements

This work is dedicated to my grandfather, Fredric J. Cross (1934-2021). He was the Veteran's Agent for ten years in the Town of Wrentham as well as an active member and two-time Commander of American Legion Post 225. His work with the local annual Memorial Day parade, his final resting place in the Wrentham Center Cemetery, and his eternal love for history and family all inspired my research and passion for this topic.

I would like to thank the History and Classics Department at Providence College. In particular, Dr. Darra Mulderry, who served as an advisor to this thesis and offered extensive ideas, edits, and support in creating this work. Her advice and care throughout this process was constant and enriching, and made it possible for me to complete this project. Additionally, Dr. Osama Siddiqui, the professor of my thesis class, who guided the initial transition from research to writing and supported my research presentations. Finally, Dr. Matthew Dowling, who read and edited this work with a detailed eye and encouragement.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support throughout this project. I could not have done it without them.

Introduction

The emotional and psychological damage wrought by the Great War has long been rendered exceptional. The sheer numbers of dead and wounded coupled with new kinds of wounds – physical, emotional, psychological – perhaps justify this view. Yet in declaring that the Great War was a shock, a watershed, a tragedy, there is an implicit presupposition that some kind of precedent existed. As long as war had existed, so too did loss, grief, and mourning. The Great War did not introduce human sorrow to the world, though perhaps it altered human remembrance. When American families grieved their loved one, was it the same processes of mourning across time? When American communities faced a war, was it the same practices of memorialization, despite the varying kinds of warfare inflicted upon the nation? How did memorialization evolve to support the new and different ways to lose a soldier, to grieve a loved one, and to mourn as members of a modern world?

For the European nations entrenched in the First World War, their populations experienced the unprecedented nature of the war in every possible facet – the sheer numbers of men lost and wounded, the new style of warfare that led to lengthy military stalemates but increased causalities, the first ever total war that incorporated civilians into the war effort, and the horrific damage the war inflicted on individuals' physical capabilities and mental welfare. Due to these unprecedented impacts of the war, the nations' collective practices for bereavement and remembrance had unprecedented dimensions as well. For example, countries faced the decision of creating national memorials for the Great War, and "in the wake of such inconceivable slaughter, purely triumphant displays of absolute jubilation seemed at best

inappropriate."[1] After the war, "traditional statuary of the type valorizing glorious battles or valiant heroes seemed ridiculous in the wake of a war that rendered such concepts irretrievably archaic. However, other existing forms were deemed more appropriate. Established funerary traditions such as inscribed wall-tablets and obelisks were popular choices for war memorials."[2] In this particular article, historian Alex Moffett refers to the Cenotaph in Great Britain. The British chose a memorial of solemnity and simplicity to commemorate the horror they endured the past years.

However, the American experience of the Great War was distinctly different. Due to its late entry, the quantitative loss of the United States was notably less than that of other nations: a disproportionate loss of life – estimated 126,000 – and number of wounded – 234,300 – of its mobilized troops. Compared to the involved powers of Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, the numerical loss and war impact was significantly less. Additionally, due to the timing of their arrival, the American soldiers' experience of military stalemate was limited. And yet, Americans felt the unprecedented features of the war vicariously. In 1916, they began to experience the totality of modern warfare as President Wilson instituted a program of Preparedness. When their wounded returned between the end of 1917 and early 1919, they, like their European counterparts, saw some unprecedented forms of damage to their bodies and minds. Further, America perhaps had one claim to an impact of war that was worse than their majority of their counterparts: the war was overseas. Therefore, Americans faced a postwar situation unique to their own experiences and the experiences of other nations.

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[1] Alex Moffett, "'We Will Remember Them': The Poetic Rewritings of Lutyens' Cenotaph," *War Literature and the Arts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 19: 1 & 2, 2007, 230.

[2] Ibid.

As a nation, the United States made important decisions and took critical actions to commemorate this war. Yet, American's identities were not tied solely to their nation, but to their region, state, county, and town. Thus, it is important to examine how communities approached grief, remembrance, and commemoration before, during, and after the First World War. Notably, the U.S.'s experience of unprecedentedly acute levels of military dead and wounded was not in the First World War, but a half century earlier in the American Civil War. As historians Caroline Janney, Jordan D. Fiore, and Lisa Boudreau have carefully recounted, American communities developed communal rituals of remembrance after the Civil War. These traditions formed in the wake of the Civil War largely through Memorial Day, becoming nationalized by legislation or standardized by community members. Many of these practices continued in the opening decades of the twentieth century of the eve of the Great War.

Although there have been studies on American memorialization, this work aims to study American memorialization's evolution distinctly due to the impact of the Great War. In that study, this research analyzes the implementation of national action to local interpretation, as well as the establishment and development of ceremonies, symbols, and organizations for commemorating war. What memorials emerged after the Civil War, and did they remain uniquely tied to that experience, or did they set a precedent for future war memorialization? How did the Great War uphold or innovate these practices? In order to answer these questions, this work closely examines collective practices, symbols, and organizations of remembrance in one New England community, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. Essential primary sources include the local newspapers *The Dedham Transcript* and *The Attleboro Sun Chronicle* and the meeting minutes, documents, and correspondence of the Wrentham American Legion. Norfolk County was not necessarily unique among its equals across the nation, and that is why it is an ideal

subject for this examination. Norfolk County was home to ordinary people, and it stands as a testament to how people coped and traditions evolved as nation recovered from its internal war and then as the world entered a modern age.

The first chapter begins with the origins: the narrative of post-Civil War commemoration practices. Drawing upon relevant secondary works, the chapter analyzes the establishment of Memorial, or Decoration, Day as an official, nationally-recognized day and its developing status as local tradition. Then, the chapter examines the Grand Army of the Republic as the nation's first major veterans' organization, and what this organization meant for postwar commemoration. Additionally, relying on newspapers, this chapter documents the detailed patterns and rituals that emerged in Memorial Days from its origins in the nineteenth century to its role on the eve of the Great War.

The second chapter focuses on the evolution: the preservations and alterations of past precedent as the nation embarked on the darkened years of warfare. Beginning with the Preparedness campaign, local communities interpreted federal programs into their practices with the use of the American flag in public buildings and private homes. When the United States partook in the war from 1917-1918, American civilians corresponded with their soldiers overseas, setting the foundation for postwar memories. Memorial Day, during those years at war, continued past precedent as a comfort for fears and a constant reminder of American strength through warfare, while evolving those collective practices to incorporate the Great War.

The third chapter analyzes the revitalization: in the two decades after the Great War, American towns invigorated their memorial practices so that those local practices followed suit with the global and national decisions, shouldered the memory of all American warfare, and established memorialization for the coming generations. Analyzing all of the following

nationally and locally, this chapter examines: the return home for living and fallen soldiers; the establishment and importance of the American Legion; the development of symbolic memorials like the Star Spangled Banner, poppies, and monuments; and the regeneration of Memorial Day. Importantly, this chapter studies how the nation understood its past and changed its memorialization practices to cope with the war and support the future.

Overall, the goals of this research are to analyze the distinct impact of the Great War in society, to document the national narrative in local implementations, and to analyze the origins and practices of local American memorialization. This is the story of ordinary people and towns who mourned and remembered their fallen as one, creating the practices of memorial with dedication and meaning so that we may remember today.

Chapter 1

Setting the Precedent for the Unprecedented

Memorialization of the Civil War and Decoration Day in Norfolk County

May 1868 – May 1916

This chapter examines American memorialization from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of Great War and the entry of the United States in April 1917. In examining this history, this chapter looks at Norfolk County, Massachusetts and its establishment of Memorial Day practices.[3] Through secondary sources, this chapter seeks to examine emerging memorialization trends on the national stage; then, using primary sources, apply the national developments to what happened in the small towns. Selections from Norfolk County's newspaper, *The Dedham Transcript*, reveal the discussion and practices of Decoration Day and Memorial Day as it progressed and developed over time into an established tradition. The precedent established in the years after the Civil War came in the forms of veterans' organizations like the Grand Army of the Republic, newspaper patterns and town customs, and the Memorial Day that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Beginning with isolated, private practices and progressing to nationally recognized ceremonies through veterans' organizations, post-Civil War memorialization set the precedents for American memorialization that would remain true through time – personal, communal memorial – and set the foundation that would eventually evolve because of the Great War.

[3] The towns of Norfolk County, Massachusetts as of Dec. 2022: Avon, Bellingham, Braintree, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Dover, Foxboro, Franklin, Holbrook, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Milton, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Quincy, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, Walpole, Wellesley, Westwood, Weymouth, and Wrentham. (Norfolk County, "Welcome to the County of Norfolk").

"Guard Their Graves With Sacred Vigilance"

The Grand Army of the Republic and the Origins of Memorial Day

Memorial Day is an American holiday for remembrance of fallen soldiers, veterans, and wars across history – throughout the nation, Americans mourn in their communities and honor the sacrifice of those before them. The first Memorial Day was in 1868, established through the veterans' organization the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.). According to current historiography, the precise origin of "Memorial Day" practices are relatively unknown, but patterns of military mourning, such as floral grave decoration, emerged from isolated instances during the Civil War. After the Civil War, those isolated practices became increasingly more common as death touched nearly every family in the nation. Eventually, the G.A.R. organized and established a day for communal mourning, setting the precedent for American memorialization in the coming century.

Sources identify a wide variety of origin stories before and during the Civil War, in which citizens honored fallen soldiers and sites of battle. Historian Caroline Janney suggested several places of origin in her book, *Remembering the Civil War*:

> …Gettysburg in May 1864 when a soldier's widow and another soldier's mother happened upon each other placing flowers on the graves […or…] Charleston's Race Course cemetery led primarily by black South Carolingians and their abolitionist allies on May 1, 1865 […or…] veterans in Waterloo, New York, in May 1866.[4]

Evidently, these practices of Memorial Day occurred in both the North and South. In early origins, these unofficial and individual practices of mourning were born of family tradition and the specificity of a personal loss. While the places and persons of these isolated instances varied, the practices that emerged contained a similar pattern throughout each place. Family members

[4] Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 98.

visited the grave of their loved one wearing all black, laying wreaths of flowers, adorning the grave with the nation's flag. In the years post-Civil War, leaving soldiers' memorials solely to individuals' responsibility no longer seemed sufficient. Due to the immense loss of life and division left over from the war, a need emerged for mourning processes that were identifiable and communal. Thus, an organization stepped forward to establish an official day for memorial.

Upon return from battlefields, men searched for the comradery they relied on to cope with warfare to support them in the next daunting task: returning to customary life. The Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), formed by and for veterans of the Union Army, was the "largest and most prominent of the veterans' organizations."[5] The G.A.R. ran at local, state, and national level. At the national level, the Grand Army of the Republic was a political lobby that had the ability to wield power. Their most famous political action was in 1881, when they fought for veteran pensions. At the state level, there were Departments, and at the local level, there were Posts led by a Commander. The local organization would prove the most effective and important to the development of communal

Figure 1: Town of Wrentham's G.A.R. members and Wrentham Brass Band in front of Wrentham's G.A.R. Hall. C.1866-1905.

[5] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 108.

Figure 1: C. Gordan Woodhams and Earle T. Stewart, *Images of America: Wrentham* (Arcadia Publishing, 1999), 76.

mourning. As a local organization, "the posts raised charitable funds through fairs and lotteries, helped the unemployed find work, and provided funerals for members whose family could not afford the expense."[6] Funerals provided by the G.A.R. reaffirmed that in post-Civil War society, despite cost, proper burial and mourning regulations were to be carried out for the nation's veterans. Primary evidence of the G.A.R., in postwar Norfolk County newspapers articles, argued "veterans are…to be depended upon…because they are…reliant on each other and their officers."[7] Communities trusted these organizations to transform their individual actions of grief into a communal experience capable of properly honoring war and loss. It was with the return of men, the organization of the G.A.R., and the needs of veterans and families, that Memorial Day transitioned from an abstract concept to an established holiday.

Despite contemporary historiographical controversary over unofficial origins, the first legal acknowledgement of Decoration Day is generally attributed to John A. Logan. Logan was a Civil War veteran from Illinois, a Congressman, and most relevant to the history of Memorial Day, served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of Republic.[8] On May 5, 1868, Logan issued General Order No. 11:

> The 30th day of May, 1868 is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form or ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.[9]

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[6] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 110.

[7] "Soldiers Under Fire," *Dedham Transcript* (Dedham, MA), May 5, 1888.

[8] Editors at Logan Museum, "Civil War," General John A. Logan Museum, 2019, https://loganmuseum.org/civil-war-record/.

[9] John A. Logan, "Memorial Day Order, General Order No. 11" (Headquarters Grand Army of the Republic, May 5, 1868), National Cemetery Administration, https://www.cem.va.gov/history/memdayorder.asp.

With this direction, towns across the nation began to practice Decoration Day with a more official vigor. For nearly a century, as dictated by Logan's order, May 30th served as the annual day of pomp and circumstance for military remembrance.[10] This first section of General Order No. 11 gave instruction in the date and the practice of basic memorial ritual. Yet, from the very beginning, the Order made an allowance for towns to arrange their ceremonies in the way that they saw fit – "as circumstances permit."[11] Firstly, this allowance gave the space for towns of varying wealth to commemorate their dead without feeling inadequate. Each town was able and encouraged to participate in services. Furthermore, the towns were able to discuss and determine what was appropriate for their men, for their memorials, and for their memories.

Primary sources of Norfolk Country indicated that the local G.A.R. posts organized the majority of the Memorial Day services from the late 1880s to the onset of the Great War. In 1883, female contributors organized and formed a Women's Relief Corps as the official auxiliary to the G.A.R. According to Janney, women were vital to Memorial Day services.[12] According to primary sources, in Norfolk County, women formed committees to complete the auxiliary functions of the G.A.R.'s Memorial Day services such as flower collection. In the latter decades of the century, the organization's "older, more prosperous veterans had the time and inclination to devote to the association," allowing it to prosper and become even more effective.[13] Memorialization became more official and organized as veterans aged and simply had more time

[10] In 1971, Memorial Day was designated for the last Monday of May, turning the holiday into a long weekend and an official start to the summer season for many Americans. (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Celebrating America's Freedoms: The Origins of Memorial Day," n.d., https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/memday.pdf.)

[11] Logan, "Memorial Day Order, General Order No. 11."

[12] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 238.

[13] Ibid, 109.

to create annual traditions and practices. As a precedent for the Great War, the G.A.R. set the foundation for veteran organization and memorial proceedings.[14]

The origins of memorial practices, veterans organizations, and Memorial Day began in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. The G.A.R. took the isolated practices of familial memorial and transformed them into the official Memorial Day that would carry on throughout history. With the order for Memorial Day, communities were able to memorialize their fallen in the manner they saw fit – one of the most important and lasting qualities of local American memorialization. It was this balance of national ordinance and opportunity of local expression that allowed towns like those of Norfolk County, Massachusetts to establish their Memorial Day practices. Over the course of the post-Civil War decades, these towns established traditions through announcements in their newspapers, parades in their streets, and memorials in their cemeteries. The national movement was brought home and personalized in the towns of Norfolk County.

"Devoted to the Interests of Norfolk County"

Norfolk County Lifestyle, Newspapers, and Local Origins of Memorial Day

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Wrentham, Massachusetts was a paradigm of a small American town. An anthology of its history was written in 1973 by historian Jordan D. Fiore, entitled *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History*.[15] In the early twentieth century, life

[14] The Grand Army of the Republic continued past the Great War and into the mid-20th century, but was eclipsed in its role by new veteran organizations like the American Legion (see Chapter 3). The G.A.R. slowly decreased in attendance and influence, until its official end in 1956 upon the death of its final member.

[15] Jordan D. Fiore, *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History* (Wrentham, MA: Town of Wrentham, 1973).

Figure 2: C. Gordan Woodhams and Earle T. Stewart, *Images of America: Wrentham* (Arcadia Publishing, 1999), 6.

in Wrentham revolved around work, school, and religion. Business consisted of local shops in the center of town, and a strong mining industry on the outskirts of town. Citizens of Wrentham mainly patronized three Christian churches – Original Congregational Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and St. Mary's Catholic Church – making Christian rituals and values ubiquitous in the town. In terms of schooling, although literacy was high, secondary school graduation rates were low. In the year 1914-1915, the town could only claim a 20% high school graduation rate.[16] Life in Wrentham prior to the war was simple and routine, but for many, it was good: Fiore argues "a young boy growing up in Wrentham in the period preceding World War I should certainly not have been bored. With so many exciting businesses in town there was always something interesting to watch and always some fascinating activity underway."[17] This image Fiore depicts of young boys is critical, because once the Great War directly impacts the United States, those boys in small town America will be the young men called to the battlefield.

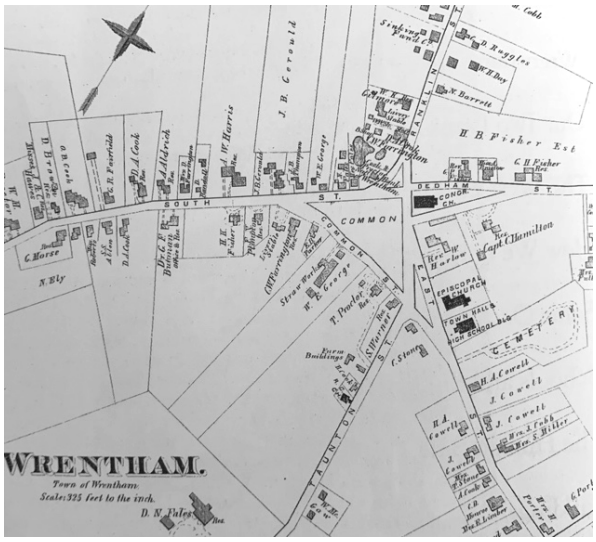

Figure 2: Map of Wrentham Center

According to Fiore, in the decades immediately preceding the Civil War, it was socially stylish to be highly patriotic whilst having very little actual involvement in the military. Then, Civil War fighting and casualties prompted tremendous focus on military battles and losses, and subsequent memorialization of the fallen. Between the 1860s and the First World War, nearly all practices of memorialization centered on Civil War deaths. In Wrentham, no community

[16] Fiore, *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History*, 160.

[17] Ibid, 188.

Figure 2: C. Gordan Woodhams and Earle T. Stewart, *Images of America: Wrentham* (Arcadia Publishing, 1999), 6.

members died in the brief Spanish-American War and the only formal attention paid to men who died in the 1910-1912 U.S. military actions in Mexico was a weekly honor roll posted in the newspaper.[18] Overall, local memorial practices, particularly Memorial Day, made no references to military involvement and sacrifice outside the Civil War.

Local newspapers documented the values and remembrance practices of Wrentham, Massachusetts through an 1888 civilian obituary, revealing the standing precedent for memorializing a community member. Two major newspapers, *The Dedham Transcript* and *The Attleboro Sun Chronicle*, covered the news in Wrentham between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *The Dedham Transcript* published news of local socialites, ceremonies, and happenings. *The Dedham Transcript* was not simply a larger outlet for basic announcements, but also held a personal connection for the residents of Wrentham. This relationship could be seen in the space and words dedicated to Wrentham citizens. In 1888, *The Dedham Transcript* printed a relatively lengthy obituary for a Miss Jerusha Saunders, a lifelong Wrentham resident. The newspaper eulogizes Miss Saunders as a "the youngest daughter of the late Deacon…," a "devout member of the Congregational Church," and a "true friend."[19] Wrentham demonstrated pride in this member of their town and great loss at her passing, creating an image of community mourning – "In the little community she will be mourned and missed as only the faithful and truehearted can be," and acknowledging "the sympathy of a wide circles of friends" for Miss Saunders's surviving sister.[20] The obituary printed in *The Dedham Transcript* in 1888 firstly exhibited that this county-wide newspaper had a strong audience and connection in the town of Wrentham. Further, this epitaphic biography resembled the existing system of community loss

[18] Fiore, 109; Example of Weekly Column: "Dedham's Roll of Honor," *Dedham Transcript*, July 15, 1916.
[19] "Wrentham," Jan. 14, 1888.
[20] Ibid.

prior to the Great War. In the town of Wrentham in 1888, there was precedent for communal loss, mourning, and remembrance. This existing pattern would be relied upon, challenged, and adapted when their main demographic of loss would shift from respected elders to young soldiers.

Newspapers were vital to the circulation of news and the functioning of the community prior to the invention of technologies like radio or news reels, and stand as the primary source for pre-Great War precedent in Norfolk County. *The Dedham Transcript* was a local newspaper that circulated roughly from 1871-1973. In its century long existence, the paper was published every Saturday morning and distributed to members of Norfolk County, Massachusetts.[21] Although the paper's main coverage was for the Town of Dedham, it included news and happenings from all towns in the county – including Wrentham, Walpole, Foxborough, and others. Its subtitle was "Devoted to the Interests of Norfolk County," and the paper fulfilled this duty in providing coverage of the county in its entirety.[22]

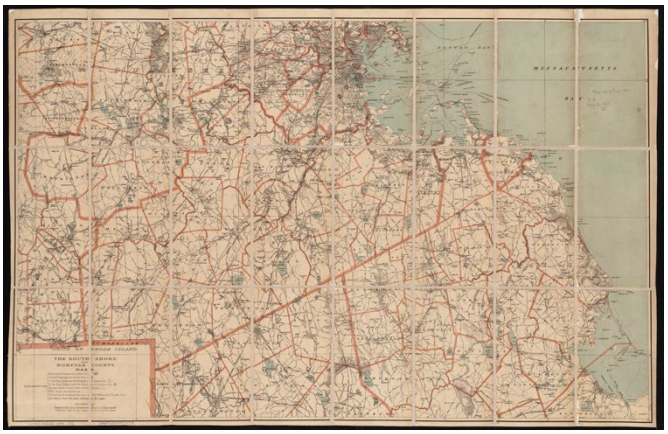

Figure 3: Map of Norfolk County, MA c. 1893

The town of Dedham likely took on this role because of its relative size and population to the rest of the county. In the twenty-first century, the town limits of Dedham are in the northwest corner of Norfolk County, whereas the town of Wrentham is in the southeast corner.

[21] "The Dedham Transcript (Dedham, Mass.) 1871-1973," Library of Congress.

[22] *The Dedham Transcript*, (Dedham, MA), 1871-1973.

Figure 3: Geo. H. Walker & Co. "The South Shore and Norfolk County, Mass." Map. Boston, Mass: Geo. H. Walker & Co., [ca. 1893]. *Digital Commonwealth*.

Dedham borders Boston, and Wrentham is the an outskirt town bordering the state of Rhode Island. Though they span widely within Norfolk County, in the larger image of the United States, they take up a small stretch in Massachusetts (around 20 miles). In fact, in colonial America, Wrentham was a part of Dedham until it was incorporated as its own town in 1673. *The Dedham Transcript* serves as a reliable primary source due to its wide circulation and extensive discussion of news inclusive of and specific to Wrentham.

In the 1880s-1890s, *The Dedham Transcript* provided a column for each county town for news such as marriage announcements, obituaries, social events, and accomplishments by locals. For Memorial Day, over the course of the 1880s and 1890s, the paper established a regular pattern for announcements and coverage. In the one or two weeks prior to the day, the newspaper would announce the ceremonies. Then, in the week after Memorial Day, *The Dedham Transcript* would provide detailed accounts of Memorial Day proceedings in each town. For example, the G.A.R. Commander would send in an announcement of the place and time; then a week later, the paper would write about the parades, speeches, and grave decorations. It was these columns, announcements, and reviews that allowed traceable patterns to develop overtime, and passed along the knowledge of what was expected and included in a proper Memorial Day ceremony.

One of the first clarifications provided by *The Dedham Transcript* was the difference between Decoration Day and Memorial Day. In the early years of this practice, there were theories about the utility or arbitrariness of the names. Some historians attributed usage to specific places, but according to Janney, "by the late 1880s and 1890s, the term "Decoration Day" could be found to designate both northern and southern observances."[23] The name could also be contributed to the connotation of the words and therefore the day's practices: Memorial

[23] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 336.

Day prompts images and sentiments of solemnity and remembrance, and Decoration may seem unfittingly celebratory. However, Decoration was not meant to indicate that the day was one of celebration and party, but rather referred to a specific aspect of the day – the floral preparation of graves. In Norfolk County, nineteenth-century newspapers used Memorial and Decoration interchangeably, though perhaps the Memorial Day appellation having a slight edge. By the 1890s, it would seem "Decoration Day" was rarely used, and generally only for wordplay in advertisements and catchy headlines. In the late nineteenth-century, Norfolk County's newspaper, *The Dedham Transcript*, in a casual and simple statement, published on May 31, 1890 that under the headline "Decoration Day in Dedham," the newspaper declared "Decoration Day, [was] but another name for Memorial Day."[24] With this statement, it can be concluded that for this particular region and at this time, Decoration Day and Memorial Day were one in the same.

Overtime, as Memorial Day developed into a tradition, local communities' ceremonies showed a development from a day of Union or Confederate commemoration to a collective practice of unity. In the 1860s, Decoration Day was unofficial and divided along lines of the battlefield. In 1865, the earliest memorial dedication and ceremonies held "no hint of the reconciliationist tone that would become so frequent on battlefields in the coming decades."[25] In the immediate postwar decades, Memorial Day was a divided celebration and a divisive topic among the recovering Union and former Confederacy. As Memorial Day continued into the 1880s, it transformed into a more united commemoration. As such, celebrations across the nation began decorating the graves of both Union and Confederate dead.

[24] "Decoration Day in Dedham," *Dedham Transcript*, May 31, 1890.
[25] Janney, *Remembering the Civil War,* 73.

The best local example of this Memorial Day progression was found in the songs that became increasingly associated with or created for the day. *The Dedham Transcript* issued the proper ceremonial music, as many towns appeared to have a selection of songs that were commonly included in Memorial Day ceremonies. Most ceremonies had a band or a chorus, singing religious hymns or common songs of remembrance like "Auld Lang Syne." At some point throughout most Norfolk County ceremonies, the towns incorporated the song "America," which all participants would sing.[26] *The Dedham Transcript* consistently noted that this song was by "*Audience*," suggesting a communal pride in country and responsibility in ceremony. In addition to classic songs of remembrance and patriotism, songs emerged with specific connotation and connection to Decoration Day; in particular, the newspaper often referred to a song entitled "We Deck Their Graves Alike To-Day."[27] This song echoed the changing context and attitudes surrounding post-Civil War commemoration. Composed by Charles White in 1875 (originally written as a poem in 1875), the song "We Deck Their Graves Alike Today" represented a change in perspective from memorialization of wartime divisions to unification.[28] The song memorialized the fallen of both sides of the war and stood as a testament to the adapting and solidifying nature of Memorial Day post-Civil War. Prefacing the sheet music was both a lyrical accreditation to a poem written by a Union veteran in 1875, as well as symbolic accreditation: "it is worthy of being preserved, not only for its poetic merit, but for the noble sentiment it breathes."[29] The song included several phrases of dichotomous memorialization: "We deck the graves alike today, Whether they wore the blue or grey;" "Whether with Sherman

[26] "America" by Samuel Francis Smith is commonly known as "My Country 'Tis of Thee." "America the Beautiful" would be written by Katharine Lee Bates in the 1890s and put to song in the 1900s.

[27] Charles A. White, *We Deck Their Graves Alike To-Day* (Boston: White, Smith & Co., 1878), https://www.loc.gov/resource/sm1878.06001.0/?sp=1.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

to the sea, Or in the wilderness with Lee."[30] In later verses, the song moves away from concrete examples to more symbolic and sentimental content, proclaiming the belief that Memorial Day should be a day "to let the 'dead past' buried lie, and now, with hands uplifted high…We pledge henceforth long as life, We join in hard but friendly strife."[31] There lay importance in this song from the simple use of "we" to the literal examples and the symbolic declarations. Memorial Day became a day to not only remember the dead, but to rejoin in ceremony. As Memorial Day carried on into the late nineteenth century, the meaning of what was merited and what was noble came to include commemorative reconciliation.

Development of Nineteenth Century Memorial Day: Norfolk County in 1888 & 1890

By the late 1800s, Memorial Day was widely observed across the nation, but the ceremonies and rituals practiced were locally organized. Through parades, ceremonies, speeches, music, grave decoration, and dinners, each town found its own collective practice of remembrance. In 1888, *The Dedham Transcript* printed one of its first in-depth, all-encompassing summaries of Memorial Day in Norfolk County in the towns of Dedham, Walpole, Wrentham, and others. Among these descriptions, identifiable patterns and unfolding traditions became apparent, revealing a general perception of proper ceremony as well as disparities among different towns.

Generally, by the late 1880s, the towns followed a basic practice of commemoration each year. In May 1888, *The Dedham Transcript* posted Memorial Day instructions and preparation for the towns of Dedham and Walpole. Entitled "Memorial Day," the announcement stated

[30] Charles A. White, *We Deck Their Graves Alike To-Day*.
[31] Ibid.

ceremonies, led by the G.A.R. Post, would be held at a Memorial Hall and "all citizens [were] respectfully invited."[32] First, each town would hold a parade led by their G.A.R. Post Commander, "all past soldiers and sailors," and local religious leaders, marching to the accompaniment of local musicians.[33] The parades ended at the local cemeteries where veterans, women, and children decorated the graves of fallen soldiers.[34] Both towns of Dedham and Walpole requested "contributions of flowers" and "contributions of choice, as well as wild flowers" so they could decorate the graves.[35] These solicitations indicated that community members were able to and expected to be involved in Memorial Day practices through donated funds or flowers. While the G.A.R. men led the day, many of the names listed as contributors were women. Committees of flower collection and of food organization all consisted of several individuals with the prefix "Mrs.," indicating that either, in addition to G.A.R. members, the wives of members and women of the town played a significant role in memorialization organization; or, that memorialization practices were separated into traditional gender spheres, in which the women organized the food and flowers. In either case, it was evident that Memorial Day was a collective effort across society. After the cemetery observances, oftentimes, there was a subsequent prayer service at local parishes. Parades, music, grace decoration, speeches, and prayer were the most common practices in developing Memorial Day standards. In closer and more thematic examination, developing concepts of commemoration – preparation, tradition, cooperation, and dedication – set the precedent for Memorial Day in the twentieth century and in the years after the Great War.

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[32] "Memorial Day," *Dedham Transcript*, (Dedham, MA), May 26, 1888.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] "Memorial Day."
"Walpole," *Dedham Transcript,* May 26, 1888.

A week after these preparations and expectations had been laid out, on June 2, 1888, the towns of Norfolk County recapitulated their Memorial Day ceremonies. The phrasing of these articles exhibited the development of Memorial Day into a tradition. The town of Norwood declared "the exercises of the GAR Post 169 passed off in a very creditable manner on Decoration Day," Walpole noted "the services of Memorial Day…were of more than usual interest," and the town of Sharon stated "Decoration Day was carefully observed here, as has been the custom for years."[36] In addition to Sharon's direct statement that Memorial Day "has been the custom for years," the ability to say that one year's celebration was "creditable" or "more than usual interest" could only come from the development and practice of memorialization in an annual manner. Memorial Day was becoming an official annual practice that towns' veterans and citizens depended on to express and display their commemoration.

The coverage of Memorial Day 1888 indicated inter-community cooperation in Norfolk County across the county and within the town. Across the county, towns worked together to create and successfully fulfill the ceremonial duties. Some towns decorated both the cemeteries within their limits and those of a neighboring towns. Speakers, bands, and religious leaders throughout the county travelled to participate in each other's Memorial Day proceedings. For example, the town of Dover cited the "[Town of] Needham Drum Corps" as their musical accompaniment.[37] Walpole's speaker was "by Thomas E. Grover Esq. of Canton."[38] Memorial Day practices happened in each town, but its participants overlapped and collaborated throughout the county. Within the towns, ceremonies incorporated individuals from different

[36] "Norwood," June 2, 1888.
"Walpole."
"Sharon."
[37] "Dover," *Dedham Transcript*, June 2, 1888.
"Walpole."
[38] Ibid.

areas of life – the aforementioned women's auxiliaries as well as schoolchildren and religious sects. In the town of Wrentham, "the decoration of graves" was done by "the school children and veterans."[39] The town of Norfolk paraded in "the following order: The Norfolk brass band, veterans, school children and citizens."[40] At the end of ceremonies in the town of Wrentham, "all respired to the church to listen to the orator of the day, Rev. Frederic Dennison."[41] G.A.R. Post veterans, local schoolchildren, prominent women, and religious leaders all collaborated together to execute the practices and commemorate the dead. These alliances of resources and personnel seemed to indicate that memorialization was a common, county-wide goal, established roles for each area of town life, and marked the beginning of shouldering grief as a community.

Lastly, these summaries of Memorial Day 1888 discussed an indebtedness and dedication to the memorialization of unknown soldiers. In the aforementioned preparation committees of Walpole and Dedham, certain members of the committees were specifically assigned to the collection of flowers for the unknown fallen. On June 2, the town of Foxborough summarized its procession: "The company then marched to Memorial hall and prayer was offered by [a] comrade…after which the cross, erected in honor of comrades sleeping in unknown graves, was decorated by a band of children."[42] Foxborough's ceremony contained all the usual elements of a parade, prayer, and participation from all sects of the town. Further, it had a special moment of remembrance for soldiers that were unidentified. Walpole also had a ceremony at "the floral monument to the 'Unknown Dead,'" and other towns made references to moments or monuments dedicated to the unknown.[43] Although recognition of the unknown dead became

[39] "Wrentham."
[40] "Norfolk."
[41] "Wrentham."
[42] "Foxborough."
[43] "Walpole."

most famous after World War I, *The Dedham Transcript* indicated that commemoration of the unknown had already established itself in American memorialization prior to the Great War. On the national stage, the system of national cemeteries was developed following the Civil War. Arlington National Cemetery created the Tomb of Civil War Unknowns for over 2,000 unknown Civil War soldiers.[44] This tomb was the first of its kind – in location and purpose – and stood as an important precedent for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier that would be erected after the Great War. Part of the inscription on the Tomb of the Civil War Unknowns read: "Their remains could not be identified. But their names and deaths are recorded in the archives of their country, and its grateful citizens honor them as of their noble army of martyrs."[45] Norfolk County took on this decree with honor and duty, and paralleled this action of new national cemeteries by decorating the graves of their own unidentified soldiers. During and after the Great War, this awareness and memorialization of the Unknown would be crucial, as the numbers of soldiers missing in action, unrecognizable in death, or buried in a foreign grave would exist at a higher level than ever anticipated.

Overall, 1888 stood as one of the first years *The Dedham Transcript* wrote about Norfolk County's Memorial Day as an established tradition with an official status and ritual practices. Patterns of preparation with G.A.R. announcements, practices of parades, community roles for music and grave decoration, and dedication with speeches and recognition of the unknown became the official practices of Memorial Day in the late nineteenth century. In the years following, *The Dedham Transcript*'s echoed many of the same traditions it had commemorated in 1888. The Memorial Day of 1890 exhibited lessons learned from the past and new concepts of

[44] Editors at Arlington National Cemetery, "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Tomb-of-the-Unknown-Soldier."

[45] Ibid, "Tomb of the Civil War Unknowns, https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Monuments-and-Memorials/Civil-War-Unknowns."

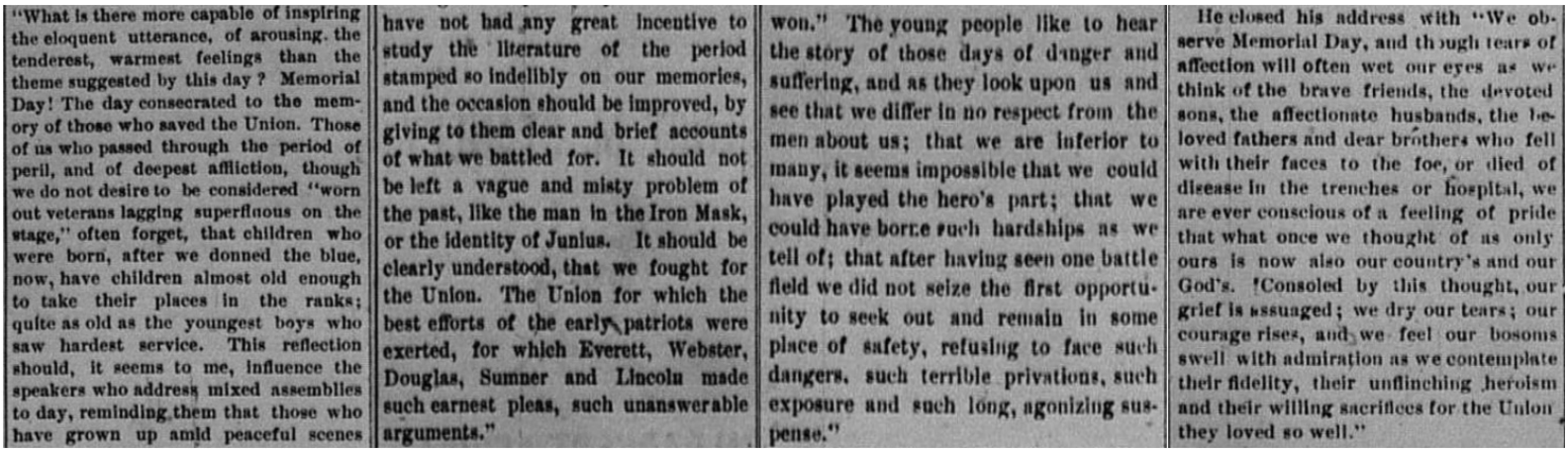
a new generation. The Memorial Days of the late-nineteenth century partly solidified practices, as well as adjusted practices on small and large scales to ensure Memorial Day exuded the proper sentiment for generations past and future.

In the weeks leading up to Memorial Day 1890, the town of Dedham posted in its May 17th and May 24th editions that "Memorial Day will be observed in the usual manner."[46] Again, there was recognition that Memorial Day was a usual practice. *The Dedham Transcript* continued its routine of announcing the ceremonies a couple of weeks prior to the day. The same year's announcement declared the "GAR will assemble in full uniform…and all past soldiers and sailors resident in Dedham or vicinity, whether members of the Grand Army or not, are invited to join the Post on this occasion, and devote a few hours to the memory of those who gave their lives for their Country." With this statement, *The Dedham Transcript* echoed concepts from Memorial Day 1888, both in terms of G.A.R. Posts heading the ceremonial plans and in intertown cooperation – as demonstrated by the phrase, "Dedham or vicinity."[47] Additionally, the announcement came from the Commander of the local G.A.R. Post. G.A.R. Posts Commanders in Norfolk County served as leaders and local contacts, which made Memorial Day both official and personal. The announcement also indicated what practices were deemed appropriate for memorialization in the 1890s, including men in full uniform and veterans from all circumstances and military branches.

In the week following, *The Dedham Transcript* published its usual summary of Memorial Day, and while the article included many of the precedented practices, it held a different sentiment as the years progressed after the Civil War. In the town of Dedham, the proceedings

[46] "Memorial Day," *Dedham Transcript*, May 17, 1890.
"Memorial Day," May 24, 1890.
[47] "Memorial Day," May 17, 1890.
"Memorial Day," May 24, 1890.

began with music by the high school chorus, speeches by religious leaders, and song by the audience. *The Dedham Transcript* reviewed the address speech by "Rev. W. J. Hogan of West Dedham" as extremely well-written and noted that the newspaper would have printed the whole speech if not for lack of space.[48] However, it did include the following excerpt:



"What is there more capable of inspiring the eloquent utterance, of arousing the tenderest, warmest feelings than the theme suggested by this day? Memorial Day! The day consecrated to the memory of those who saved the Union. Those of us who passed through the period of peril, and of deepest affliction, though we do not desire to be considered "worn out veterans lagging superfluous on the stage," often forget, that children who were born, after we donned the blue, now, have children almost old enough to take their places in the ranks; quite as old as the youngest boys who saw hardest service. This reflection should, it seems to me, influence the speakers who address mixed assemblies to day, reminding them that those who have grown up amid peaceful scenes have not had any great incentive to study the literature of the period stamped so indelibly on our memories, and the occasion should be improved, by giving to them clear and brief accounts of what we battled for. It should not be left a vague and misty problem of the past, like the man in the Iron Mask, or the identity of Junius. It should be clearly understood, that we fought for the Union. The Union for which the best efforts of the early patriots were exerted, for which Everett, Webster, Douglas, Sumner and Lincoln made such earnest pleas, such unanswerable arguments." won." The young people like to hear the story of those days of danger and suffering, and as they look upon us and see that we differ in no respect from the men about us; that we are inferior to many, it seems impossible that we could have played the hero's part; that we could have borne such hardships as we tell of; that after having seen one battle field we did not seize the first opportunity to seek out and remain in some place of safety, refusing to face such dangers, such terrible privations, such exposure and such long, agonizing suspense." He closed his address with "We observe Memorial Day, and though tears of affection will often wet our eyes as we think of the brave friends, the devoted sons, the affectionate husbands, the beloved fathers and dear brothers who fell with their faces to the foe, or died of disease in the trenches or hospital, we are ever conscious of a feeling of pride that what once we thought of as only ours is now also our country's and our God's. Consoled by this thought, our grief is assuaged; we dry our tears; our courage rises, and we feel our bosoms swell with admiration as we contemplate their fidelity, their unflinching heroism and their willing sacrifices for the Union they loved so well."

This speech reflected upon of Memorial Day, veterans, and Norfolk County history now that the Civil War was becoming increasingly distant history. The Reverend began with "Memorial Day! The day consecrated to the memory of those who saved the Union," and then acknowledged "children who were born, after [Norfolk County residents] donned the blue, now, have children almost old enough to take their place in the ranks."[49] This year's speech emphasized Norfolk County's role in the Civil War and its allegiance to the Union. This highlighting of Union identity stood in contrast to Janney's argument of reconciliationist, suggesting that while reconciliation existed in grave decoration and music, the towns of the North still demonstrated pride in being the victors. In the closing of the speech, the Reverend said that the town would

[48] "Decoration Day in Dedham," *The Dedham Transcript*, May 31, 1890.
[49] Ibid.

remain "ever conscious of a feeling of pride that what we once thought of as only ours is now also our country's and our God's."[50] Pride, contribution, and mourning began to be carried on a communal level. Norfolk County felt its importance to the Civil War as something instrumental to their own legacy, and something that transcended the local level and contributed to the legacy of the United States and the moral side of history.

This speech also began to consider the questions of age and generation. A generation of adolescents was growing up without any personal context of a nation at war. The speaker stated, "young people like to hear the story of those days of dangers and suffering," and their fascination that average people fought so bravely.[51] Generational divide had been foreshadowed in *The Dedham Transcript* in 1888, under an article entitled "Soldiers 'Under Fire.'" This article discussed bravery and made the declaration that "veterans are more to be depended upon than raw troops." The article attributed this belief to the values of comradery and authority that veterans understand. Further, the article concluded its argument with: "Whether bravery is the result of physical condition or no, it is certain that it is much easier for some men to be brave then others, and many hold that all men are cowards at heart."[52] Whether these convictions were widespread in Norfolk County or not, it was clear that this perspective was an existing opinion in 1888 that was then subsequently put forth in a Memorial Day speech in 1890. If articles and speeches of 1888-1890 spoke of a generational gap of knowledge and experience, it would remain to be seen how the Great War would challenge such opinions. The veterans of the Civil War would not be available, the large majority of soldiers being sent off would be young and inexperienced, and mankind's bravery would be tested to unknowable limits.

[50] "Decoration Day in Dedham," May 31, 1890.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "Soldiers 'Under Fire,'" May 5, 1888.

In May 1890, addition to Memorial Day recapitulation, *The Dedham Transcript* demonstrated an interest and call to action in gathering information from "Veterans of the Civil War," indicating a community pride and governmental obligation within the county. The article sought to acquire "the names of surviving soldiers, sailors and marines who were mustered into service of the United States during the war of the rebellion…" as part of the upcoming census.[53] The country valued information about military service, a precedent that would be followed entering and exiting the Great War. The article also noted the need for information "of the widows of soldiers, sailors and marines who have died."[54] A system of gathering widow information would become vitally important to more than census-taking, because after the Great War, widows and mothers would be provided the opportunity to make decisions on the memorialization of their fallen husbands and sons.

In 1890, *The Dedham Transcript*'s report on the Decoration Day activities in the town of Dedham, it continued themes of prior Memorial Days, as well as emphasized the emerging concepts of communal contribution and memorial, fears of generational divide, and the importance of military service in American systems. These traditions would be the precedent of Memorial Day prior to the onset of American involvement in the Great War. In the aftermath of the war, Americans and Norfolk County would return to these rituals as a foundation for conceptualizing the tragedy overseas.

Twentieth Century Memorial Day on the Eve of American Involvement in the Great War: 1915 & 1916

[53] "Veterans of the Civil War," *Dedham Transcript*, (Dedham, MA), May 31, 1890.
[54] Ibid.

Twenty five years later, Norfolk County found itself once again preparing for its Memorial Day ceremonies. While the years and decades solidified and preserved annual traditions in America, the Great War was actively changing the Europe's concepts of precedent and status quo. The Great War began in Europe in 1914. Since then, the world had lost millions of lives. New technology and strategy had changed warfare and everyday life to a new realm of cruelty and horror. As a neutral nation, the United States and the American citizens had to find their role. How were they to memorialize their dead of previous generations while maintaining awareness of the falling men abroad? What traditions could uphold the weight of domestic American loss and a foreign battle? Would this foreign battle be incorporated into American memorialization? The Memorial Days of 1915 and 1916 were testaments to American tradition and foresight as they stood on the precipice of their own involvement in the Great War. These Memorial Days served as the final segments in the chapter of prewar American memorialization, because in the next year, American citizens would be facing a much different and far more daunting responsibility.

On May 19, 1915, *The Dedham Transcript* posted a Memorial Day announcement from G.A.R. headquarters not unlike those of the nineteenth century. The Post commander described the usual ceremony and practices: "teachers, scholars, and citizens will join the parade…the usual service will be held, and the decorating of the graves…the Women's Relief Corps will hold their service to the unknown dead…a measure of 'Auld Lang Syne.'"[55] This meaningful portrayal of Memorial Day rang true to the "usual ceremony" of decades prior with involvement from a wide array of community members, unknown recognition, and memorial music.[56] The

[55] "Memorial Day, Monday, May 31st.," *Dedham Transcript*, May 29, 1915.
[56] "Memorial Day," May 17, 1890.

town of Walpole posted an announcement with the same attributes. Additionally, Walpole added that this Memorial Day was "to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the Civil War."[57] Despite the ongoing conflict in Europe, town announcements of Memorial Day in 1915 did not mention the Great War. Rather, there was specific calling to the anniversary of the loss of Americans in American warfare. The scene changed significantly since the nineteenth century, as Civil War veterans became older and fewer. In fact, this edition of the newspaper published two more articles discussing the status of Memorial Day and its Civil War veterans. The first, entitled "The Rearguard of the Dead," portrayed the parade of veterans as the walk of elderly men's "shuffling feet" and a humiliating exercise of "play-time soldiery."[58] Another article reflected on the changing image of the parade "in sturdy mass, year after year," to "familiar faces…missing, and no new forms arise;" although, this article noted that the parade was "as vigorous and hearty as before."[59] This article believed despite the change in demographic, the presence of veterans was still strong and inspiring. The article closed with:

> Memorial Day teaches the great lesson of peace after strife, friendship after the bitterest enmity. In the kindly mist of these after years the blue and the gray merge into a single color – blue gray. God, time and human nature has healed the wound, has re-soldered the broken link. All is peace and kindliness.

This image of a united Union echoed theories of reconciliation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It appeared by the early twentieth century, reconciliation of the U.S. in Memorial Day was established. Further, in the Memorial Day announcements of 1915, there was no mention of the war in Europe – Norfolk County newspapers even declaring that "all is peace and kindliness." At this time, American citizens carried out their memorialization strictly as tradition

[57] "Memorial Service at Walpole," *Dedham Transcript*, May 29, 1915.
[58] "The Rearguard of the Dead," May 29, 1915.
[59] "Memorial Day," May 29, 1915.

deemed, and did not consider Memorial Day as an opportunity or an appropriate place to shoulder the memory of the war in Europe – this would be changed by the speaker of the day. Norfolk County citizens were certainly aware of the war and America's need to find its role, for example, "'America and the World's Future' was the subject of the morning sermon at the Baptist Church Sunday by the pastor."[60] However, it would seem that the Great War did not have a place in Memorial Day. That holiday was reserved for the Civil War.

The 1915 summaries of Memorial Day suggested that Memorial Day had been properly carried out. In the town of Norwood, "Memorial Day was fittingly observed."[61] The town of Walpole, in reflection of the labor needed to decorate the graves, posted a call to action for "eight or nine men who would feel patriotic enough […to form…] a chapter of the S.A.R." The Sons of the American Revolution appeared to be another group, like the G.A.R., dedicated to fulfilling Memorial Day properly.

On June 5, 1915, *The Dedham Transcript* published the Memorial Day speech in its entirety – the publication of the speech itself was a callback to Memorial Day 1890, when the newspaper lamented the lack of space for recapitulating the ceremony. In the twentieth century, it appeared Memorial Day summary was more of a priority. The published speech spent time discussing the Civil War and veterans, but its key impact was its emphasis about the war in Europe. American citizens were "the unwilling witnesses of world-wide war conditions."[62] As such, "it may be well…on this historic day to recall the past which it commemorates and to consider its bearing on [the people's] present duty and outlook."[63] The speaker stood firm in

[60] "In Memoriam," *Dedham Transcript*, May 30, 1915.
[61] "Norwood," June 5, 1915.
[62] "Memorial Day at Dedham," *Dedham Transcript*, June 5, 1915.
[63] Ibid.

isolationist policy, though recognized the war "in the magnitude of its proportions and the deadly nature of its methods and purpose."[64] The speaker also drew a key difference between the Great War in Europe, "for aggression, for selfish glory, and for the lust of empire and power!" and the Civil War, "for righteous self-defense, for freedom and humanity."[65] In his acknowledgment of the European conflict, the speaker contended that the war in Europe was a tragedy brought on by greed and power, whereas the Civil War was for a just and moral cause. At this time, the speaker felt the responsibility of Americans was "to hand on to coming generations this priceless heritage of American nationality unimpaired" and "resolve that the heroic dead shall not have died in vain."[66] Because this speech was published in its entirety, there lay an indication that it well represented the sentiment of Norfolk County residents. Therefore, it can be concluded that at this time Americans understood and empathized with the level of danger and loss in Europe. They still held steadfast to their pride in the Union victory of the Civil War and the subsequent progress of reconciliation made in the nation. In putting together and carrying out Memorial Day, the Civil War remained the priority in remembrance. For Norfolk County, the main impact of the Great War in 1915 was the reaffirmation for the duty of American memorialization: to be on the moral side of history and to pass down traditions of remembrance to future generations.

In 1916, *The Dedham Transcript* made its Memorial Day announcement with plans nearly identical to those of the previous year. The ceremony would include a parade, grave decoration, and music.[67] However, there was an addition to the May 27, 1916 edition. *The Dedham Transcript* published a regular column entitled "The Stroller's Notebook," which

[64] "Memorial Day at Dedham," June 5, 1915.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "The Order for Memorial Day," May 27, 1916.

touched upon various happenings of the county with a thoughtful tone. In discussion of the situation abroad, this week's article asked for people to give thanks for their peace. Further, this week's "The Stroller's Notebook" wrote about Memorial Day. This article opened by describing Memorial Day "with its fragrance of forget-me-not."[68] This floral association would prove a major symbolic change in Memorial Day after the Great War, when the poppy became the flower dedicated to Great War remembrance. This article also began to suggest that Memorial Day was prepared to incorporate soldiers of other wars and shoulder a broader role: "originating as it did, in memory of the soldiers who died in the Civil War, the idea of the day, being beautiful and broad, became a household thought and inspiration."[69] This recognition was one of the first of the era to recognize the importance of Memorial Day in its own development. The article closed with "In setting aside a day of honoring the soldiers, the reflection brightens our own life and the lives of those about us."[70] This article recognized the origins, progress, purpose, and collateral beauty of Memorial Day in a symbolic way. The subtext of this article indicated that in the final Memorial Day before American involvement in the Great War, the holiday and the people of Norfolk County were prepared to memorialize the next generation befallen to warfare. Though this precedent was set, it was unlikely that the author of this article knew to exactly what extent Memorial Day would need to adapt.

In its reflection of Memorial Day services, the newspaper published the full speech, as in the previous year. However, this speaker differed from previous in background and perspective. Rather than a religious minister, this speaker was a Civil War veteran; and rather than

[68] "The Stroller's Notebook," *Dedham Transcript*, May 27, 1916.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

proclaiming emancipation as the goal of the Union, this speaker believed solely in the flag.[71] The speaker criticized slavery for its evil and rejoiced about slaves' freedom. But the speaker also acknowledged there was "slavery even in Massachusetts" and continued "We did not fight to free the slaves. We fought to redeem the flag."[72] This speech suggested that for the speaker, it was more important to preserve the Union than end slavery, and that emancipation was only a byproduct of warfare. In previous years, the Memorial Day speech centered around the glory of the Union and Massachusetts residents for being a part of it. This year, the speech focused on the importance of the image of the United States in the world under one flag. Prioritizing the American flag over slavery emancipation made a statement about the racial values of Civil War veterans and citizens of the time. It also indicated that the American flag leading the nation into the Great War should be one of historically unblemished perfection. This level of patriotism and confidence in the flag, as a symbol for the whole country, introduced a dangerous level of confidence in the final pre-WWI Memorial Day. However, the expression of this sentiment coincided with the increasing number of advertisements for American flags and patriotic consumer products displayed in *The Dedham Transcript* in the early twentieth century. The recapitulation of the 1916 Dedham Memorial Day speech implied how Americans reflected on the Civil War and how they perceived the American image at this time.

Twentieth century Memorial Day depicted the ultimate solemnity Americans had for the Civil War and its fallen soldiers and veterans. Further, it created an image of Norfolk County towns prior to the American declaration of war – a community, perhaps hubristically, confident in their role in history and their ability to follow the American flag into the impending years.

[71] "Memorial Day in Dedham," *Dedham Transcript*, June 3, 1916.
[72] Ibid.

Chapter Conclusion

Memorialization from 1868-1916 was, although not known by its creators, a precedent for what was to come in 1917-1918. In Norfolk County, these creators sought to embrace the day set for remembrance. They formed the traditions that were specifically important to their own perspective, communities, and loses. Over the years, Memorial Day developed into a tradition that stood for solemnity in loss, unity in grief, and hopefulness in commemoration. Americans had no concrete expectation of what the Great War would mean for their nation, but they did know what it meant to honor soldiers and commemorate as a community. On the eve of American involvement in the Great War, veterans organizations, Memorial Day, and local community stood as pillars of precedence for a nation at war, in mourning, and careening toward the modern world.

Chapter 2

Preserving and Altering Past Precedent

The Evolution of Memorialization in Norfolk County from Preparedness to Armistice

June 1916 – November 1918

The United States entered the Great War on April 6, 1917. At first, slowly – patriotism and preparedness washed up on the shores on the nation from the war on the other side of the Atlantic. From there, wartime perspective ran into every stream and vessel of American society. No demographic, no ideology, no tradition was spared from the Great War, and the towns and people of Norfolk County, Massachusetts were no exception. From the spring of 1916, trends of preparedness and patriotism infiltrated local newspapers and customs. In the war years, citizens of Norfolk County were active contributors on the battlefield and on the home front. Norfolk County had spent the previous half century developing its traditions. It would all be challenged during the war years.

This chapter will analyze Norfolk County's memorialization processes from the nation's entry to its exit of the war. Garret Peck's *The Great War in America: World War I and its Aftermath* depicts the national actions of the U.S. of the years leading up to, during, and after the Great War. Drawing from Peck's work, primary sources from *The Dedham Transcript* and the archives of the Wrentham American Legion indicate the implementation of those national actions in local communities. Examples included Norfolk County's evolution of tradition took hold in the commercialization and display of the American flag, the correspondence of hometown heroes, and the reliable coping mechanism of Memorial Day. The war years served as a pivotal time in which American towns connected their established past with their impending future. For many citizens, this connection meant increasing patriotism and adjusting tradition so

that it could celebrate their triumphs and shoulder the new burden of loss. Americans could not know exactly what happened on the battlefield, but because of the precedent of decades prior, they did know how to support soldiers and remember sacrifice. The war overseas challenged previous concepts of memorialization by drawing connections to current warfare, and Norfolk County coped with the war by utilitzing their precedent: enriching their patriotism, extoling hometown heroes, and evolving traditions.

"I'd Like to Be the Kind of Man the Flag Could Boast About"

Passive to Active Patriotism in the Early Years of War

In the war years, the national stage inundated the citizens of the United States with nationalism through propaganda and the concept of duty. In the final months leading up to the war, "preparedness" populated the speeches of leaders and the headlines of articles. As American involvement came to fruition, Americans turned preparedness to action. The American flag became the ultimate, nationalistic symbol of Americana, service, sacrifice, and dedication. The Great War was across the sea, and Americans – from the White House to the homestead – searched for ways to be active even when the war was overseas.

From 1914-1917, the U.S.'s neutrality and isolation meant that memorialization was not necessary, because no men had been lost. Yet, Americans accepted the national call for "preparedness," actively evolving their memorial practices to a militaristic situation. Preparedness was an American prewar political, economic, diplomatic, military, and ideological strategy dominating the years of the Great War when the U.S. was not yet a participant. Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge launched Preparedness in 1914, and Wilson

pursued it in 1915 after the sinking of the *Lusitania* and his 1916 tour of the Midwest.[73] Preparedness was utilized in the U.S. during its time as a neutral nation, though this campaign heavily favored the Allied side.[74] It was controversial in its reception – some pacifists believed it was promoting the military economically and ideologically, some militarists believed it was not enough action to defend the U.S. in case of attack.[75] The United States government strategized to build up its standing military, prepare its economy, and implement higher levels of militarism and nationalism so Germany did not view the United States as a weak, conquerable entity. Further, Wilson used preparedness to unite society ideologically under a bond of 100 percent Americanism, for fear that Americans would bind their allegiance to their European ancestors on this Axis side.[76] In accordance with this research, this section seeks to prove how preparedness was also a social construct in local communities for bringing Americana, patriotism, and military honor to their homesteads.

On Saturday morning June 6, 1916, nearly one year before the U.S. declared war on Germany but amidst the Preparedness campaign, *The Dedham Transcript* published a poem entitled "A Patriotic Wish."[77] Simply put, this poem associated patriotism with wartime readiness for men, opening with "I'd like to be the kind of man the flag could boast about."[78] War here was depicted as a highway to masculinity, adulthood, and glory. American men aimed

[73] David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 11th ed., vol. 2 (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2019), 903-905; William L. Genders, "Woodrow Wilson and the 'Preparedness Tour' of the Midwest, January - February, 1916," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (July 1990): 79–80.

[74] Peck, *The Great War in America*, 35; David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 903-904; William
L. Genders, "Wilson and the 'Preparedness Tour' of the Midwest," 79–80.

[75] Shi, Ibid.

[76] Barbara L. Tischler, "One Hundred Percent Americanism and Music in Boston during World War I," *American Music* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 164–165.

[77] "A Patriotic Wish," *Dedham Transcript*, June 10, 1916.

[78] Ibid.

to be "the chap that's ready for a fight; Whenever there's a wrong to right."[79] In other words, Americans must be prepared. As the summer of 1916 continued, elements of preparedness saturated *The Dedham Transcript*. The weekly column of the newspaper bore a new heading: "The Transcript Believes in Preparedness."[80] Preparedness soon found its way into the everyday jargon of newspaper articles, but it adapted in its usage. In the spring and summer of 1916, preparedness was a form of propaganda, though according to Peck, perhaps also a necessity as the nation headed toward a war it was entirely unprepared to take part in.[81] The word's connotation varies historiographically as a propagandistic military term to a vital step towards the success of the U.S. in the Great War. Importantly, the word's connotation varied and evolved in its own time. Other entities besides the government and the news outlet used preparedness. "Preparedness" was soon found in advertisements for leisure activities and consumer products. Hirsch's Men's and Boy's Store called for its customers to "prepare for the hot weather" with discount suits, hats, and summer apparel.[82] This reoccurring advertisement in the *Transcript* called into question whether

Figure 4: Advertisement in The Dedham Transcript.

[79] "A Patriotic Wish," June 10, 1916.

[80] "The Paper Situation," *Dedham Transcript*, July 15, 1916. The article addressed the adapting availability and reallocation of resources in the United States, particularly in regard to paper.

[81] Garrett Peck, *The Great War in America: World War I and Its Aftermath* (New York, NY: Pegasus Books, 2018).

[82] "Preparedness," *Dedham Transcript*, July 22, 1916.

Preparedness was a piece of propaganda or a catchphrase. In either sense, it confirmed that preparedness was an action.

After the Civil War, Americans took action to transform a tragedy into a memorialized tradition. Thus, there was a precedent for Americans taking action to cope with tragedy. As the Great War darkened the shores of the European continent, the wake was sent across the Atlantic stirred Americans into patriotic action. In terms of preparedness, it became a word connotated with taking concrete action. The months progressed, and on April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and became an active participant in the Great War.

During the Great War, Americans yearned for a symbol and an action that could encapsulate their dedication to the nation, the war, and their fighting and fallen men. The main form of citizen action in Norfolk County involved the Star Spangled Banner.

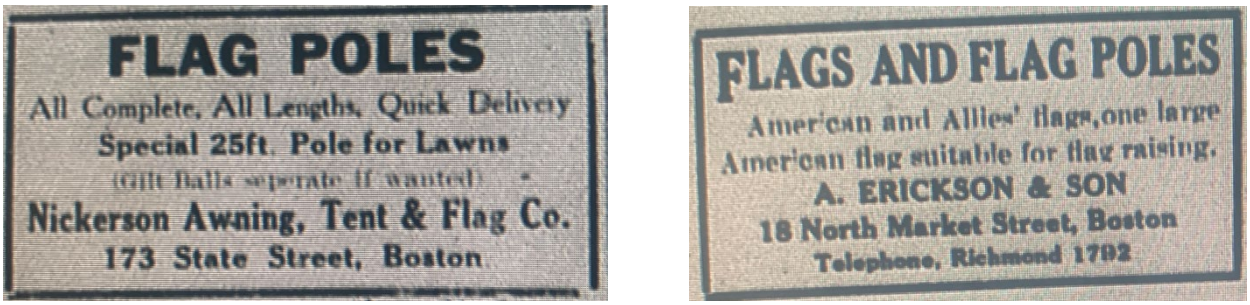


Figure 5: Advertisements in The Dedham Transcript. Spring 1917.

Citizens aimed to memorialize and support their men abroad at home by displaying the American flag in both town buildings and private homes – stirring conversation about etiquette and propriety. In April of 1917, just one week after the nation joined the war, *The Dedham Transcript* printed an article entitled "Opinions Differ," which debated the proper display of the American flag in the morning or the night. The pro morning argument was published as a Letter to the Editor, reprimanding those who displayed the flag throughout the night and suggesting that "Perhaps this matter of etiquette [was] not known to some of our Dedham citizens who set their

flag much as they elect a congressman and no more attention to it."[83] Based on this letter, it seemed as though some citizens patronized small towns as they aimed to take a more active role in their patriotic display. Proper etiquette and decorum was to be set and to maintained, because each citizen was a representative of their boys overseas and their nation's cause. One citizen continued the debate over the display of the star spangled banner by writing in: "In speaking of the matter a friend said that in war time a flag should fly night and day until peace is declared. Is that true?"[84] this response proved that the display of the flag was a pressing topic in everyday conversations among friends and the private citizens of small towns. *The Transcript* responded with the conclusion that "It must be left, it seems, to the individual choice."[85] However heavily debated, these opinions, conversation, and public debates proved in a broader sense just how important unified support became in small towns during the war.

A week later, *The Transcript* retracted its libertarian conclusion by printing "The Flag Again." Under this title, *The Transcript* declared while "No restrictions are placed by law on the display by private citizens of such State or National flags as they wish on their own premises…the manner of display is carefully prescribed…" – twenty-four hour display of the flag was only for forts under attack, so "until the bombardment of Boston begins, the only respectful action to take is to lower the flag at night…"[86] Once this debate was settled, the newspapers in the Spring of 1917 quickly became populated with consumer advertisements for the American Flag. Many of these advertisements offer the sale of flag poles as well, confirming that the installation of flags on private homesteads was the fashionable new symbol for

[83] "Opinions Differ" *Dedham Transcript*, April 7, 1917.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] "The Flag Again" *Dedham Transcript*, April 14, 1917.

nationalism.[87] Though the raging battlefield was far away, Americans stayed active and remained true in their dedication practices by displaying the American flag.

In some ways, American involvement of the war occurred in the upper echelons of society, as the nations' leader made the decisions to end isolationism, participate in the war, and encouraged patriotism on propagandistic levels. Thus, how did wartime patriotism infiltrate down to the common man? Most obviously, it impacted local people as their fathers and sons went to fight. For those remaining, *The Dedham Transcript* proved that the American flag brought patriotism from the White House to the front porches of Norfolk County. At this point in time, Norfolk County had not lost many, if any, of their own men. Memorials in a specific way were not yet appropriate for this war, but no doubt there was an emotional weight left in the space of those men aboard and in the overwhelming feeling that times would soon be very dark. Therefore, Americans evolved from memorialization ceremonies to everyday symbols and practices of dedication. While the flag was a nationalistic symbol from the time of Revolution, it was the Great War that changed the flag from special usage in exercises like Memorial Day grave decoration to a consumer product, representing the importance of the overseas war in their hearts and actions and their anticipation of loss and sacrifice on the very front porches and lawns of small town America.

In the spring of 1917, the United States had declared themselves an active participant in the Great War. On a micro level, there was upheaval of tradition in the realm of patriotism. Patriotism and nationalism was no longer a passive, ideological concept. Preparedness turned to action, mainly through consumerism as represented in the advertisements and publications of *The Dedham Transcript*. Even before the towns of Norfolk County lost any men, they were

[87] *Figure 5.*

active participants in the symbolic war effort. The early months of American involvement in the Great War and memorialization of it were marked by preparedness in local community enterprises and patriotic action in American homesteads.

"Write when you can."[88]

The Foundation for Hometown Heroes

Later in 1917 and throughout 1918, the lives of American men were lost to the cause. Small towns had to memorialize these men. Logistically and emotionally, this memorialization was a daunting task. For the Civil War, Americans were able to build their memorialization traditions based on a war on their own soil. The bodies and graves of individual men, the fields of battle, and the records of their soldiers were tangible to the grieving nation. For the Great War, the battlefields, the fallen men, the knowledge of what was happening were all thousands of miles away. And yet, small towns had the advantage. While men lost their lives or became lost in a trench-ridden wasteland, they were not lost in the hearts and actions of the small towns they had left behind. Norfolk County knew exactly which men they had fighting the war. After the war, they were able to say their names, build their memorials, and honor their men both dead and alive.

Many towns claimed a number of active duty soldiers fighting in the war, and thus, many towns claimed a number of men lost to the war. According to Fiore, the Norfolk County town of Wrentham lost four men on active duty in the Great War.[89] Fiore names a Walker B. Mason as the first Wrentham man to die, though Wrentham chose another soldier as their central figure of

[88] George McInnis, "From George McInnis to Bill," November 29, 1917, Wrentham American Legion Archives.

[89] Fiore, *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History*, 112.

the Great War: George McInnis. McInnis would become the hometown hero for Wrentham in the postwar years, but the origin of his story as a local military hero began in the wartime years. Born and raised in Wrentham, George McInnis enlisted in the war effort on July 23, 1917 at the age of 16.[90] Just before his 18th birthday, McInnis died in battle in France.[91]

There is not much evidence as to what the town of Wrentham did to memorialize McInnis when they discovered the news. It is possible they did not know until after the war, as the Great War battlefields were layered with those missing in action or vaporized in the haze. However, due to the available historical record of McInnis, it is reasonable to assume Wrentham knew about his death within an appropriate time frame. While evidence of immediate town reaction is not present, there does exist evidence of McInnis's time in the war and his relationship with his town.

That evidence came from McInnis himself, and the correspondence between McInnis and his hometown friend stands as the most vivid artifact between hometowns and men overseas. The records of the Wrentham American Legion preserved a letter sent from George McInnis to his friend Bill. McInnis was made a hometown hero by history, but by all accounts of the time, he was a common man. This letter was made into a typed, preserved correspondence by historians, but in reality it was "written in pencil on faded YMCA paper."[92] And at that, it was one of many letters and notes communicated between McInnis and his hometown supporters. These words are pivotal to the argument of this thesis, but for all intents and purposes it was casual conversation among friends. All this is not to say that this letter is an unimportant scrap of history. No doubt McInnis treasured each letter he received, for even though this letter "came

[90] Fiore, *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History*, 112.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Historian of the Wrentham American Legion, "From George McInnis to Bill ," January 17, 1992.

along with eight other[s]," he signed his post-script with the imperative statement "Write when you can."[93] However, this letter must be diminished right up until the point that it can be acknowledged this letter is truthful. It can be concluded that the relationship between these two men was one of childhood or hometown friendship, because they speak of other persons with familiarity. The most important comment McInnis made in this correspondence was: "Some of the fella[s] think that the people have forgotten them since they have left the States but I don't think they have. By some of the letters the fellow[s] get things are very high in the States."[94] In the middle of his war service, McInnis felt assured that his small town back home remembered him. His sentiments of hope and faith in America were spoken in confidence to a trusted friend. American small towns communicated with their soldiers through private correspondence, and those at home sent messages of hope and good faith to their boys overseas. McInnis surely missed his life at home, asking Bill of his mother, but he also put forth self-reassurance that Wrentham has not forgotten him. McInnis would not live to see just how much the town of Wrentham would remember him in the postwar memorialization of the Great War.

During the war, American small towns set the foundation for their hometown heroes with correspondence and sentiments to keep the faith. The common man on the home front ensured that the common boy on the battlefield was remembered. Americans maintained remembrance precedent by keeping the belief that soldiers were honorable and valued members of society. They enhanced their practices by creating connections to the war overseas with letters. During the war, small towns valued their hometown heroes through correspondence, setting the foundation for those that would be welcomed home or memorialized after the war.

[93] McInnis, "From George McInnis to Bill," November 29, 1917.
[94] Ibid.

"Public Humiliation, Prayer, and Fasting"

Observance of Memorial Day 1917 & 1918

Memorial Day in 1917 and 1918 gained more prominent and permanent national importance. During the war, Memorial Day became federally recognized through speeches of President Wilson. Though still mainly a holiday for the Civil War, local communities implemented Wilson's recognition through local speeches that directly referenced the Great War. While precedented practices of the day remained true, the holiday evolved as the world changed. In 1917 and 1918, Memorial Day remained a beacon of American patriotism, local pride, and the importance of memorialization.

The evolution of the holiday was exemplified with an article published by *The Dedham Transcript* on May 15, 1917. This letter to the editor encapsulated the changing demographic of veterans and civilians, and the need for a sentiment of solemnity to the day as the war raged overseas. The open letter, entitled "A Memorial Day Innovation," was written by the president of the Sons of Veterans.[95] This organization represented a transition from the post-Civil War Grand Army of the Republic to the American Legion, a post-WWI veterans' organization. The Sons of Veterans represented a peacetime nation, where the veteran representative was a descendant of a soldier rather than a soldier himself. After the war, there would be enough young, able-bodied veterans to run the local organization. As the standing representative of a veterans, the writier implemented "a notable change…this year in Memorial Day services."[96] By this time, the author felt that Memorial Day had become a day "of sport, rather than one of Memorials."[97] Due to the war abroad, a holiday of sport was no longer appropriate. This holiday's role in wartime

[95] Frederick E. Grant, "A Memorial Day Innovation," *Dedham Transcript,* May 19, 1917.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

challenged the local populations to "make up a program that [they felt would] be appreciated by the townspeople," and "the public [was] invited without charge."[98] The actual outline of events appeared to maintain the same basic structure as the prewar holiday. The sentiment, however, was altered to be more humble and solemn. This article emphasized that all citizens were invited without charge, because the memorial process was meant to be supported, appreciated, and attended by all citizens. Memorial Day of 1917 would hold an official federal status, a more solemn tone, and an open invitation in Norfolk County.

The townspeople answered the ideological and logistical call to action outlined in "A Memorial Day Innovation" by increasing their attendance and dedication to the day, displayed in the following week's "Order for Memorial Day" and the subsequent coverage of the services.[99] In the Order, the Grand Army of the Republic Massachusetts urged their community to "make a special effort to attend this service," undoubtedly because of the changing situation and the catastrophe overseas.[100] One week letter, the official recapitulation of the services affirmed "the Memorial Day exercise this year brought a change in the time of holding them and a change for the better," because "the hall was completely filled by those who came from all sections of the town and who came in spite of the unpropitious weather conditions."[101] This Memorial Day stood out among the rest because of its increased attendance and dedication of citizens.

One of the best examples of continuity and change in Memorial Day 1917 were the words of the days' speakers, who highlighted both the history of American warfare as well as the new war overseas and its impact of civilians and the flag. The first speaker reflected the

[98] Grant, "A Memorial Day Innovation."
[99] "Order for Memorial Day," *Dedham Transcript,* May 26, 1917.
[100] Ibid.
[101] "Memorial Day Services at Dedham," *Dedham Transcript,* June 2, 1917.

changing values of Americans during wartime when he "outlined the similarity between the present war and the Civil War" and "made a stirring appeal to all to do their duty."[102] Firstly, he addressed the tradition of war in the United States and how Americans relied of the past memorialization practices to conceptualize the unknown present and future. This concept of precedent played a key role in the development of memorialization traditions from the Civil War to the post-WWI years. Second, he spoke of the duty of all Americans. His words of duty aligned with the transformation citizens had practiced, in the newspaper content and advertisements, from passive preparedness to active patriotism. Likely, memorialization duty became more important during the war because Americans were so distant from the battlefields. There was a need to feel useful and honor sacrifice. Patriotic memorialization was a solution to that problem. Memorial Day served as a time to celebrate duty and nation and to take action.

According to *The Transcript,* Memorial Day 1917 had a second speaker, who spoke of the war and utilized the image of the flag to narrate the changing world, national, and local landscape. As discussed, the flag became an increasingly commercialized and treasured image for Norfolk County homesteads during the Great War. The second speaker "pictured the present war vividly" and used the image of the flag to declare the duty of soldiers and civilian sacrifice: young men "must sacrifice all for [the] flag and offer even life" and civilians must "pay the cost," and though "all [their] sacrifice of wealth and business cannot equal the loss of a single American life…The flag must return from European battle fields pure and unchanged and still standing for Liberty."[103] In line with the Preparedness and total war campaigns, the speaker emphasized the duty of Americans to sacrifice what they could, though it would never compare

[102] "Memorial Day Services at Dedham," June 2, 1917.
[103] Ibid.

to the sacrifice of a life overseas.[104] Prior to American involvement in the war, Memorial Day was for unity, bereavement, and hope. During the war, Memorial Day was for fulfillment of duty and symbolic support of a war thousands of miles away.

In coordination with past precedent, *The Dedham Transcript* printed reports of individual towns, and as in decades prior, many towns chose to feature their Memorial Day practices. Across the map, towns reaffirmed that Memorial Day 1917 evolved quantitatively and qualitatively. Many towns spoke of the increased numbers of their audiences: in the town of Westwood, "Memorial Day was much larger than usual;" in the town of Dover, the article specifically noted "the large attendance of citizens."[105] In its quality of content, the town of Norwood simply noted Memorial Day "was more elaborate than usual."[106] Specifically, the town of Medfield named the title of the central speech "Prophetic Patriotism," emphasizing the theme of patriotism in this wartime holiday.[107] Further, towns aligned in their specific references to the Great War. For example, in the town of Dover, the "emphasis was laid upon the three supreme needs of the present war – men, munitions and money."[108] Memorial Days prior to the Great War reserved majority of their words to the Civil War and the Civil War alone. However, Memorial Day 1917 was abundant with direct references to the ongoing war. For example, in combination of increased attendance and the impact of the ongoing war, Norwood added a new group to their list of participating organizations – "the new Military Training School."[109] The individual town

[104] Total War: Many citizens of the United States were not eligible for battle due to age or gender, but were still called to duty through volunteer work, business restructuring, etc.

[105] "Wrentham," *Dedham Transcript,* June 2, 1917.
"Dover."

[106] "Norwood."

[107] "Medfield."

[108] "Dover."

[109] "Norwood." June 2, 1917.

recapitulations echoed that of Dedham's. Patriotism, value, and specific evolutions in the name of the Great War characterized the patterns of Memorial Day 1917.

One year later, the United States was still entrenched in the Great War, and President Wilson declared Memorial Day 1918 a day for solemnity and prayer – a declaration which towns implemented in their own ways. On May 18, 1918, *The Dedham Transcript* recapped Wilson's declaration a front-page article entitled "The Nation Puts A New Meaning in Memorial Day".[110] In 1918, President Wilson acknowledged Memorial Day a day for "public humiliation, prayer, and fasting."[111] On a national level, it was evident that the president felt the need for official fulfillment of memorializing needs. As American families lost their loved ones, the nation needed to take a concrete action that recognized the sacrifice of those lost and the grief of those left behind. Norfolk County took on the challenge and direction of President Wilson by evolving their practices with new flags and attitudes. *The Dedham Transcript* posted its usual announcement, and the following week summarized the services of Memorial Day. It was evident Memorial Sunday 1918 was a day of old and new memorialization practices. Primarily, in the town of Westwood, "A new U.S. flag was unfurled at the town hall on Memorial Day," and "the advanced season and excellent care made the Westwood Cemetery look especially fine on Memorial Day this year."[112] As a precedented collective practice, organizers meticulously prepared the graveyards of fallen soldiers for Memorial Day. As part of a changing situation, the United States flag, as the ultimate symbol of dedication, continued to make an appearance as the war years progressed. Secondly, the town of Walpole published a singular sentence that captured the essential argument of this chapter: "Memorial Day was observed as usual…but to many the

[110] "The Nation Puts a New Meaning in Memorial Day," *Dedham Transcript*, May 19, 1918.

[111] Woodrow Wilson, "President Wilson's Memorial Day Proclamation" (New York American, May 11, 1918), Smithsonian Institution.

[112] "Westwood," *Dedham Transcript*, June 1918.

carious exercises held a meaning which had not been felt for many years."[113] As discussed in Chapter 1, the phrase "as usual" was critical to the establishment of Memorial Day practices.[114] By 1918, Memorial Day was still recognized with the status of a tradition. Memorial Day was a ritual, consisting of annual practices and sentimental value. Memorial Day, however, was susceptible to evolution as needed by American society. Norfolk County clung to the holiday during the war years with "a meaning which had not been felt for many years."[115] Times were darker than they had been in many decades and generations. Amidst the unknown of the future and the grief of the present, Norfolk County was able to rely on Memorial Day 1918 to cope with the Great War.

The Memorial Days of the Great War years represented the evolution of American memorialization. In many ways, these holidays followed precedent of those before them through the general structure and the habits of *The Dedham Transcript*. Importantly, it represented the new hallmarks of the time: patriotism, the American flag, duty to those overseas. Memorial Day stood the testament of time as an enduring, reliable steadfast for community bereavement.

Chapter Conclusion

Six months later, the great powers of the war would sign an armistice. The years of Great War had impacted American society in an unprecedented and unfathomable way. While that statement is a broad historical perspective, the manner in which it evolved the common people's traditions is apparent. Local newspapers represented the way in which wartime ideals, such as preparedness and patriotism, perpetrated local conversation and action. The Preparedness

[113] "Walpole," *Dedham Transcript*, June 1918.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

campaign, which was meant to prevent war, changed American patriotism to an active movement, and symbols of nationalism, like the American flag, found itself onto the very porches and town halls of Americans. It seized ordinary boys on the brink of manhood and set them up for beacons of tragic heroism in the postwar years. With this tragedy overseas, the people of local communities took a previously established holiday and adapted it to a comforting and active coping mechanism for the current duress of their friends and family.

This chapter began with the image of the Great War as a concept washing upon the shores of the United States. In some ways, it did seep in slowly, like in the way preparedness gradually became patriotism or the flag become increasingly important in its display. Yet in other ways, the Great War overpowered like United States like a tidal wave, forcing Americans to scramble for an action to take and an ability to cope – many in Norfolk County relying on Memorial Day for an expression of bravery, respect, appreciation, and solidarity. Overall, just as the Civil War set the precedent for the unprecedented Great War, the war years set the precedent for the postwar years as it sent the boys to war that would become the hometown heroes of Norfolk County. The next years and decades would yet again challenge local American society. As the Great War washes away, it left American small towns soaked by tragedy, leading citizens to question whether they must rebuild their ruined pillars of precedent or allow them to be swept away forever and begin again.

Chapter 3

Setting the Precedent, Again

The Revitalization of Memorialization in the Aftermath of the Great War

November 1918 – May 1939

This chapter examines the revitalization of collective practices in the two decades after the First World War. After the Civil War, local communities memorialized their experiences and losses through community bereavement with veterans' organizations and the origins of Memorial Day. During the Great War, national leaders and local citizens evolved those practices through national and local patriotism campaigns and symbols and the continued practice of Memorial Day. After the Great War, American people faced the tragedy of warfare and the unknown future with community bereavement. Soldiers both surviving and fallen returned to their hometowns welcomed by ceremony, the American Legion emerged as an influential veterans' organization, and Memorial Day stood as a revitalized holiday of remembrance for all wars. In this chapter, The secondary and primary sources document the implementation of the national narrative in local postwar practices, narrowing the lens to: the Welcome Home ceremony in Wrentham, MA; the funeral of repatriated hometown heroes; the creation and duties of the Wrentham American Legion post, the Wrentham World War I Memorial, and local Memorial Day ceremonies.

Memorialization become intensely more important in small towns in the aftermath of World War I. In accordance with tradition, towns practiced Memorial Day with grave decoration and veteran's organized and led memorials. Yet the war changed the global landscape, and as micro examples of that change, small towns revitalized prewar practices with individual remembrance of soldiers, solemn new memorial styles, veterans' organization that were young

and eager. These Massachusetts towns remembered their men lost abroad and supported their men returning home, and war veterans remembered their comradeship abroad and brought it home to their towns. Memorialization was fortified through local remembrance of surviving and fallen soldiers, the creation of the American Legion, symbolic representations, and Memorial Day rituals. American society had to set up new traditions capable of shouldering this war's memory, revitalizing their memorial practices so that they may carry on into the next era of American history.

"Lived Clean, Fought Hard"

Local Remembrance of Living and Lost Soldiers

History estimates the United States lost nearly 117,000 men to the Great War.[116] National history memorialized these men for their service. Local hometowns remembered these men for their lives before, during, and after the war. Postwar remembrance must be viewed for both the men who survived and the men who lost their lives. Secondary sources depict that for returning soldiers, the welcome home varied in existence; and for fallen soldiers, many were unidentified, remained abroad, or took years to be brought home. Primary evidence proved that, at least in the town of Wrentham (of Norfolk County, MA), the community remembered and memorialized their soldiers both dead and living. Through welcome or memorial, surviving veterans and fallen soldiers of the war were met with memorials of individualization, honorable sacrifice, and community bereavement. The Welcome Home Ceremony of 1919 and the funeral of George MacInnis in 1931 represented the revitalization in postwar memorialization and the differences between national memorial and local remembrance.

[116] Peck, *The Great War in America*, xii.

As the Great War's final act of cruelty, it left the world with millions of fallen soldiers, many of whom were unidentifiable. How was a small community thousands of miles from the battlefields meant to compensate with something like that? It was near impossible to scope, but the town of Wrentham wasted little time in trying to recover. The Memorial Day Welcome of 1919 stood as a testament to the future of memorialization. Relying on past precedent and wartime evolutions, Wrentham put forth a memorial ceremony – no more than six months after the Armistice – that welcomed home its soldiers and honored its dead.

In 1919, the process of returning soldiers home was long and drawn out, and as such, some towns took that time to plan out appropriate welcome ceremonies. According to Peck, the nation organized mass transports to relocate hundreds of thousands of broken boys and men back to American soil.[117] The men aboard those ships "came home adrift, disillusioned, and disoriented from the experience after being told their crusade would lead to world peace."[118] In this section, drawing from Peck and the evidence of Norfolk County, it seems that while men returned disillusioned by the promises of their country, they could find comfort in the welcomes of their towns.

The town of Wrentham scheduled their ceremony for May 31, 1919. This date was practical, in that it allowed six months for their soldiers to return home and time for citizens plan a proper ceremony. This date was also culturally meaningful, as the last weekend of May belonged to memorialization and war remembrance for over fifty years.

[117] Peck, *The Great War in America*, 234. Peck cites an example of a returning ship with an estimated five thousand men arriving back home in July 1919.

[118] Ibid, 317.

The program for the day, preserved at the archives at the Wrentham American Legion, identified key elements of the ceremony that followed the precedent of prewar memorial ceremonies, with town intersectionality and traditional music, but refit them to a post-WWI context, with new memorial dedications, songs, symbols, and war records. First, the program identified community selectman and a "Permanent Memorial Committee," indicating that community involvement and memorialization were a standing topics of importance to the community. In continuity with prewar practices, all members of the town were involved in memorial processes and duties. The next page cited dedication to the Bronze Memorial Flag Staff, which would serve as the town's memorial to the Great War and was "dedicated to the citizens of Wrentham who served in the World War" (see Ch. 3, Sec. 3).[119] The following page listed the program of the entire day's events and participants, which aligned closely with Memorial Day practices from before and during the war: "music by the school chorus" and closing with the song "America."[120] The Evening Program included the Boy Scouts and Taps.[121] Traditional songs and community involvement were aspects of precedent the town chose to include in the new world ceremony. However, there were several new additions. First, nearly all the songs, such as "Flag of Our Nation" or "Flag of Our Native Land," indicated that the symbol of the American flag was indeed taking hold as the ultimate representation of dedication. During the war the flag was used

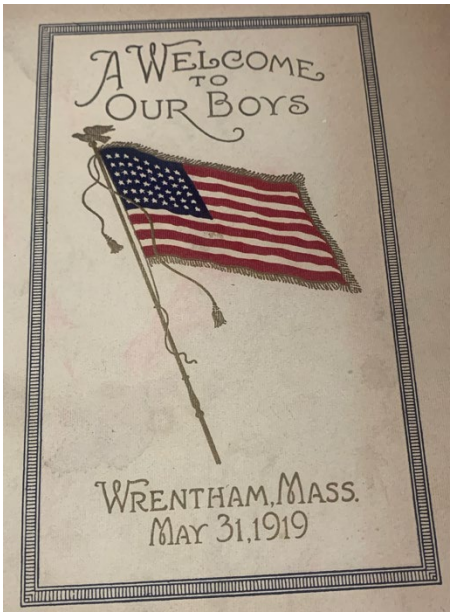


Figure 6: Program from Soldier Welcome Home, Wrentham, MA. May 1919.

[119] "A Welcome to Our Boys," May 31, 1919, Wrentham American Legion Archives.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

to show patriotic support, but after the war its connotation developed to include remembrance and memorial. Americans revitalized their music selection, because the world war could not fit into the specific lyrics of Civil War songs. Therefore, ceremonies now included new sounds of patriotism and remembrance. The citizens of Wrentham organized the Memorial Day Welcome of 1919 to include some enduring symbols of nationalism and remembrance – as with Taps or America – and some new symbols that related directly to the Great War – as with the new songs – in an effort to shoulder this new wave of grief and incorporate the new values of memorial ceremony.

The most important pages of this program, however, were those dedicated directly to the service of Wrentham citizens in the Great War and wars across history. One page entitled "Wrentham's War Record" listed each number of men in service of the French and Indian War, the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Great War.[122] The Great War stood out among that list as the only war, recognized in memorialization practices, to take place on foreign grounds. The program stated 85 men from Wrentham served in the World War.[123] In addition to a culminating number, the program listed every one of their names. It was hypothesized in Chapter 2 that communities get careful track of their own during wartime – this program affirmed wartime that theory because of its individualized dedications. The following page listed the four men who lost their lives to the war. It named George W. MacInnis [sic], Walker B. Mason, Earle M. Rhodes, and Dickran Diran in memoriam.[124] Further, it provided information on their branch, their date and location of death, and their military accomplishments. In the aftermath of World War I, it

[122] "A Welcome to Our Boys," May 31, 1919.

[123] Ibid.

[124]"Post 225: About This Post" (The American Legion, n.d.), Wrentham American Legion Archives, https://centennial.legion.org/massachusetts/post225.: The spelling of George's last name varies by source: McInnis, MacInnis, Mc'Innis. Each spelling in the chapter correlates with the source being analyzed. In 2023, the Wrentham American Legion uses the George W. MacInnis spelling.

was a daunting and near impossible task nationally to gain information on every fallen man. However, in the small towns of Norfolk County, every name and detail of their losses was remembered. For the men lost forever and the men returning home, the town of Wrentham made it clear, through revitalized ceremony, that none of their soldiers were forgotten.

The town of Wrentham welcomed its surviving soldiers home six months after the war ended, but for those who did not survive, it took considerably more time for their bodies to return home. According to Graham, the United States had a unique opportunity among World War I participants, because their loss was small relative to other nations. Therefore, while a difficult task and not comparable to local remembrance, it was at least conceivable that the U.S. could memorialize individual soldiers, even with the simplest of graves. The United States government aimed to offer structure as well as autonomy in the process of burial, whether it be a foreign grave or repatriation to a hometown cemetery. Just under a year after the armistice, the government announced that families could, depending on where exactly their loved one had died, decide to bring the remains of the dead home or allow them to be buried abroad, giving "a comforting measure of autonomy" to American families. [125] Graham continues to scope the difficulty of such decisions for American families. Should they disturb the fallen from their final place, or agree to leave their sons, husbands, and fathers buried in a foreign land? Graham believes many families, if they were aware of the option, chose to bring their loved one home because "the ability to bury a loved one in the hometown cemetery held a strong appeal," many "rejected the notion of their loved one continuing to serve the country, even in death," and "many soldiers wanted their bodies brought back home if they died in battle, and their letters to

[125] John W. Graham, *The Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages of the 1930s: Overseas Grave Visitations by Mothers and Widows of Fallen U.S. World War I Soldiers* (Jefferson, North Carolina & London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2005), 35.

their families made their wishes quite clear."[126] Graham is generally complimentary of the U.S. services that organized burials of fallen soldiers. Lisa Budreau tends to be more critical and depicts the choice as an added burden to families: "the agonizing wait for the body's return could take years. For others, the decision to leave their deceased overseas came at an equally high price. There would be no funeral service, no headstone in a local cemetery, nothing left to venerate, and no closure so necessary in the grieving process."[127] The local memorial which had become so precious and vital to American bereavement over the past century was now an uncertainty. Budreau also notes that the Great War left behind an unprecedented number of unidentified dead, and while local communities had long remembered their unknown soldiers, on the global stage Great Britain, France, and the United States coped with this challenge by building a single memorial for an unidentified soldier.[128] Overall, "While the democratic options presented to families may have appeared to be the best policy at the time, the outcome did little to promote national solidarity as intended…impassioned debate raged across America."[129] Graham summarizes the argument well, identifying the conflict was really about ownership over the dead. Did the bodies of fallen soldiers belong to the land they came from or the land they died in? Who was to make the decision for the location of the fallen soldier's final resting place – the family or the country? The Wrentham Legion's archives indicate a compromise – the ownership of a fallen soldier to their local community.

The community found a balance in claiming the soldier for the nation, using images of patriotism and sentiments of glory, and for the family, recognizing the life of the fallen solider as

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[126] Graham, *The Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages of the 1930s*, 39.

[127] Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 15.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

a common but valued member of their hometown. According to Legion archives, the official funeral proceedings for Wrentham's hero George MacInnis were held in July 1931. A local newspaper published the proceedings and eulogy for MacInnis: a familiar practice of hometown ceremony, revitalized to include elements of familiarity and with odes to nationalism. Evidently, the family of MacInnis chose repatriation as the proper memorialization for their soldier. The title of its article read "G W. M'Innis Lived Clean, Fought Hard: Eulogy Pronounced Over Wrentham's First Soldier to Die in War."[130] This article reaffirmed secondary claims that there was a lengthy timeline for repatriation, because it stated, "the body arrived in North Attleboro last Monday," meaning it took eleven and a half years for MacInnis's body to return to Norfolk County.[131]

The Wrentham community memorialized its hometown hero with a communal action, identity, and remembrance. The newspaper article proved communal action when it stated, "there were 350 persons in the church and as many more outside, who were unable to enter."[132] The article created an image of an overwhelming audience overflowing the size of the venue. Repatriation of fallen Great War soldiers was debated by the nation and the families, but it was the community that truly marked a difference in memorialization overtime. The funeral for one soldier, passed nearly twelve years prior, was overwhelmed in its attendance. In addition to showing solidarity through action, the words of the eulogy and the article showed solidarity in community identity. The article described MacInnis as a Norfolk County man through and through: "born…in North Attleboro, but removed early in life to Wrentham, where he attended the public schools. He was a member of the choir of Trinity Church and was employed by F.W.

[130] "G W. M'Innis Lived Clean, Fought Hard," Wrentham American Legion Archives, July 25, 1931.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

Bird & Son of Walpole."[133] The memorialization of MacInnis dedicated equal time to his life in Norfolk County and his time as a soldier. While the national record recognized MacInnis as a decorated soldier in the World War, the local funeral proceedings recognized him as a member of their own community first. The eulogy was able to speak to MacInnis's approach to life, from "his bright, cheerful personality" to his final words to the speaker, "typical of the clean young lad…'Well…I'm going to live clean and fight hard.'"[134] The community knew MacInnis before he became a soldier, and they knew him on the brink of warfare. Many even knew him during the war, as discussed in his correspondence (Chapter 2). After the war, the community remembered him in that specific and personal way. The war was horrible, and the aftermath was raw, muddled, and confusing. Yet twelve years later, in over a decade since his passing, the community of Wrentham remembered MacInnis in a manner only they could. They planned the day with precedented procedures, "taps were sounded" and "there were many beautiful floral tributes," but this ceremony was different than memorial proceedings before the war. After the war, towns put life back into memorialization with a deeply solemn and personal soldier's funeral.

Secondary sources debate the quality of national services for fallen soldiers, but primary sources demonstrate the time it took to bring MacInnis home did not take away from the proceedings of the community. In their actions, in their words, and in their memorial, Wrentham remembered their hometown man with a funeral of solemn, individualized dedication. Today, the grave of George MacInnis lies at the edge of Wrentham's local cemetery. The simple grave represents the way a community shouldered the grief of the Great War as one.

[133] "G W. M'Innis Lived Clean, Fought Hard."
[134] Rev. A. Harrison Ewing, "G W. M'Innis Lived Clean, Fought Hard."

After the war, memorialization was not a short process. It began in the immediate aftermath, as communities decided what to do for those living and returning home. A decade later, the town actively memorialized its fallen, repatriated soldier. The local communities remembered those returning home, whether living or fallen, with individual recognition, communal mourning, and revitalized memorialization.

"To Preserve the Memories and Incidents of the Great War"

The National and Local Creation of the American Legion

Once the town welcomed veterans home, what did the veterans do? While the funeral of MacInnis was a communal experience, who actually organized its proceedings? In answer to both, Great War veterans formed the American Legion as an organization for war veterans, memorialization, and community involvement. Memorialization and remembrance can be abstract concepts, and in the abstract modernity if the postwar world, the nation and communities searched for definitive leaders to guide them into through the hard times and difficult decisions. The American Legion served that role. This section seeks to examine establishment of the American Legion nationally and its implementation on the local level, the relations of this veteran organization to the Grand Army of the Republic, and the role the American Legion played in postwar memorialization.

According to Rumer, the American Legion began in France, where American soldiers organized and planned their postwar organization.[135] When the Legion returned to the States, veterans met "at St. Louis, after the participants had had a few weeks to read accounts of the

[135] Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion, An Official History, 1919-1989* (New York, NY: M. Evans & Company, Inc., 1990), 31.

Paris Caucus to see conditions in the United States that needed addressing, and to look to the future."[136] By September 15, 1919, the 66th Congress of the United States passed an act to incorporate the American Legion.[137] The American Legion was given jurisdiction, rights to its name, and limited political power. Yet what stood out brazenly among the legalities and logistics of creating this organization were these enacted words:

> That the purpose of this corporation shall be: To promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the Great War of 1917-1918; to cement the ties of love and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country.[138]

This section outlined the four central purposes of the American Legion: to promote peace in the postwar years, to remember the Great War in its entirety, to continue a sense of solidarity as men transitioned from soldiers to veterans, and to serve the nation. A corporation of peace born from war was fitting to the political Wilsonian ideologies of postwar America. However, the American Legion stood for more as an institution – one that was made by veterans and for veterans, intending to move forward into the changing world as envoys of remembrance.

In addition to the legal entities and the ideological principals of the Legion, this Act set specifications based on past precedent of veteran's organizations. Originally, the act deemed:

> that no person shall be a member of this corporation unless he served in the naval or military service of the United States at some time during the period between April 6, 1917, and November 11, 1918, both dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of enlistment, served in the military or naval services of any of the Governments associated with the United States during the Great War.[139]

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[136] Rumer, *The American Legion,* 39.

[137] William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 66.

[138] "An Act to Incorporate the American Legion" (66th Congress of the United States, September 16, 1919), Wrentham American Legion Archives, Section 3.

[139] Ibid.

This clarification sent several messages. First, its exclusion of veterans of previous wars followed a precedent set by prewar memorial exercises, i.e., the G.A.R. for Union veterans of the Civil War. Second, its clear pronoun usage excluded women from the organization. Just as the G.A.R. had the Women's Relief Corps, local women created their auxiliary to the American Legion in later years. The basic membership of the American Legion aligned with the guidelines for G.A.R. members. The exception to this statement was the final guideline, which moved to include veterans of the Allied powers as welcome invitees of the American Legion.[140] The Great War changed American viewpoints on isolationism and alliances, and their memorial practices reflected that change. Memorialization was a lifeline in the bleak aftermath of the war. Including Allied veterans revitalized veteran organizations by sending a message that they would be a wider, worldlier beacon of peace than their predecessors. The incorporation of the American Legion in September 1919 was crucial in the development of postwar memorialization because it set the national framework for the local posts to interpret.

Despite the nuances in everything the Act said directly and indirectly, the American Legion was created as an organization to support veterans in their lives after returning home and the communities to which they returned. According to Pencak, after national incorporation, the Legion "hoped to establish a post in every county in the United States."[141] Local posts were "established at meetings called by Legion organizers sent out by National Headquarters" or "in other cases, existing local veterans' group simply applied for and received Legion charters."[142] The national creation of the Legion stood as a precedent for veteran unity in the return from the

[140] This specification ran opposite to the decisions of other Massachusetts organizations, who moved to include veterans of the Axis powers in their memorials. Namely, Harvard University's memorial to a few fallen alumnus of the German military.

[141] Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941*, 63.

[142] Ibid, 63.

battlefield to the untouched soil of America. Further, the outlined structure for the Legion was a postwar realization that recovery from the Great War was needed in America in a localized, personal, and communal way.

The veterans of the town of Wrentham mobilized quickly to form their own local Legion. Wrentham applied for a Post through an application, which according to Pencak, meant the veterans of the town were already relatively organized. The archives at the Wrentham held the original application. This application listed the names of the aspiring members. Importantly, this application left the name for the Post blank. There was no apparent evidence as to when exactly the Post was named after George W. MacInnis. Recorded minutes from the meetings of 1919 were still under the heading "Wrentham American Legion Post 225."[143] However, an event program from November 1919 featured "George W. MacInnis" as the official name for Post #225. One of the first acts of the Legion must have been name selection, because from the first meeting on October 5, 1919 to an event held on November 26, 1919, the Legion chose their first fallen soldier, George MacInnis, as the namesake of their organization.

According to Pencak, the American Legion relied on its main predecessor, the Grand Army of the Republic, as a guide for what to do and what not to do in their organization. Pencak describes in great detail the functions of the G.A.R., but for the purposes of this analysis, his most important include that the G.A.R. "lobbied successfully to establish Decoration (later Memorial Day as a holiday," "…took a special interest in the younger generation, organized a 'Sons' auxiliary," and "…presented flags to schoolhouses throughout the nation."[144] Pencak affirms many of the patterns recognized in local newspapers, because he depicts a G.A.R. that

[143] "Wrentham American Legion Post 225 Meeting Record, Oct. 1919-Dec. 1920," October 1919, Wrentham American Legion Archives.

[144] William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 28.

stood for recognized tradition, generational honor, and local displays of symbolic patriotism. Pencak continues his comparison to the Legion, noting "The Legion would borrow much from the GAR," and "the Legion would also seize every opportunity to associate in public with its illustrious predecessor."[145] However, Pencak allows for an evolution between these prewar and postwar organizations, because he states "like any younger generation with a mission, the Legionnaires not only tried to equal their ancestors, but to surpass them."[146] Pencak believes the American Legion served as a Great War recreation of the Grand Army of the Republic, but with more driven energy to achieve greater veteran protections, higher enrollment, and a more, unlike the GAR's Northern bias, united organization than their predecessor. The American Legion aimed to fulfill its duty of being an organization for veterans by ensuring proper record keeping and recognition was done. The recorded meeting minutes of Wrentham's American Legion post proved local Legions did have many of the goals Pencak outlined, but also expanded the scope of responsibility to their local duties.

First, Pencak is correct that attendance and knowledge of local veterans proved to be some of the actions most important to the Legion. Many of the early meeting records are dominated by lists of attending and new members. However, in addition to high enrollment for the national organization, local Legions prioritized gathering information of their fellow soldiers who did not return home with them. One meeting stated the action "Voted to obtain photos of Wrentham men who had died in the war."[147] This request exemplified the importance of remembrance and individualism in the memorials of Wrentham serviceman. The Legion strived to remember their fallen, and remember them in a personal manner. In continuation of that goal,

[145] Pencak, *For God & Country,* 30.
[146] Ibid.
[147] "Selected Extracts from Wrentham's American Legion Records," May 1920, Wrentham American Legion Archives.

one veteran in particular was taken care of by the Legion. Local newspapers recapitulated the services for George W. MacInnis, but Legion records proved it was they who organized the elaborate and thoroughly done funeral. Their minutes recorded, under the titles of "Special Meetings;" in July 1921, "Voted to appoint…a committee of three to procure firing squad and rifles for the funeral of George W MacInnis" and "voted to have the commander procure a funeral (flower?) piece for the funeral of George W MacInnis;" in September 1921, "Funeral of George W MacInnis held."[148] MacInnis was one of their own both in military service and community identity. It was the American Legion who ensured his memorialization was properly done. Pencak's depiction of the Legion was accurate, but local archives revealed that one of the most important and unsung responsibilities of local Legion posts was memorial. The Wrentham Legion meeting minutes from 1920-1921 demonstrated high values and a dedication towards uniting together as surviving veterans and remembering their fallen brothers.

Secondly, Pencak suggests that the American Legion believed itself stronger than predecessors because it was nationally united in its goal. In other words, it did not have lingering postwar alliances as the Grand Army of the Republic did in its creation. This analysis contributes to the unprecedented nature of the Great War, as it was one of the first to be fought solely overseas. The Great War also stands relatively unique for its time in that majority of Americans sympathized with one side of the war, whereas the Revolution and the Civil War divided loyalties among Americans. However, the concept of unity does not yet exist among veterans across history. Early records of the Wrentham Legion proved all of the members of the American Legion were veterans of the Great War, and as seen from their meeting minutes, they dedicated

[148] "Selected Extracts from Wrentham's American Legion Records," July 8, 1921.
Ibid, July 20 1921.
Ibid, Sept 1921.

many of their actions toward memorializing the Great War. As it stood, the G.A.R. was for Civil War veterans and the Legion was for Great War veterans. However, local Legion duties and roles adapted overtime. As the immediate war aftermath passed, (and likely increasingly more as G.A.R. members aged or passed away), the American Legion demonstrated actions of memorializing more wars and more veterans than their own. For example, "At the meeting of March 6 1929…heirs of Civil War veteran…wished to give to the Legion Post 225 the old drum that [their Civil War veteran ancestor] had carried in the Civil War…it was moved, seconded and voted that the drum be accepted."[149] By the 1930s, the activities, goals, and role of the American Legion in local towns was well established. Newspaper evidence represented the common role and contributions the Legion made to the community, and oftentimes it was directly under the moral mission of memorialization. For example, newspaper clippings from 1932 stated "tomorrow Rhodes square will be dedicated by the Town of Wrentham and the George W. MacInnis Post, No, 225, American Legion."[150] As the years went by, the American Legion became the central organization of war artifacts, preservation, dedication, and memorialization across history. For better or rose, the age of Great War soldiers revitalized the population of American veterans, and their role in organizations adapted from prioritizing their own to including all.

The establishment of the American Legion was based on past precedent, but it took on new forms in the postwar years. Pencak accurately depicted the intentions of the national organization, the commonalities between the Grand Army of the Republic, and the priorities of Legion posts. Local records widened and focused that lens to depict local Legion posts as

[149] "Extract from the George MacInnis Legion Post 225," c. 1991, Wrentham American Legion Archives.
[150] "Selected Extracts from Wrentham's American Legion Records." Nov 11, 1932.

evolving creations that adapted to the needs of their veterans and their community. From the immediate aftermath of the war to the interwar decades, the local American Legion stood for unity among veterans and memorialization – first those of the world war, and then those of all wars. The Legion was a body of dedicated veterans that took on new roles in the modern world, and set new expectations for veteran's organizations in local communities.

"Dedicated to the Citizens of Wrentham Who Served in the World War"

Symbolic Memorialization for the Great War and the Modern World

In society, people will cling to symbolic representations of their values and causes. For the Great War, symbolism presented itself through the American flag, red poppies, gold stars, and solemn monuments. This section seeks to prove how symbolic representation of the Great War was reborn from wartime roots – as with the American flag, Great War symbols – as with the red poppies, multi-war motifs, as with the gold stars, and new world precedents – as with the modernized memorials.

During the war, *The Dedham Transcript* documented the commercialization and privatization of the American flag. Local citizens used the flag to represent their dedication to the American war cause and their awareness of the sacrifice those abroad made in honor of the cause. When the war was over, the questioned remained: now that the star spangled banner was a household item, should private citizens be held to military standards on how to display it? Supported by the American Legion, the legislation and code put forth a guide for citizens on proper flag etiquette. Though not active military members, civilians were expected to display the flag properly and respect its symbolic nature.

The archives of the Wrentham Legion contained an instructional pamphlet entitled "Flag of the United States: The Living Symbol of Our Great Republic: How to Display It, How to Respect It."[151] The front page of the pamphlet described the origins of the information as such:

> On Flag Day, June 14, 1923, representatives…met…for a conference…to draw an authentic code of flag etiquette. The code drafted by that conference was printed by the national organization of The American Legion and given nation-wide distribution…the 77th Congress of the United States…passed…a codification of the Flag Code…[the code was then] changed to comply with the law. Since the original Flag Conferences, in 1923-1924, the code has been adopted for use by 45 other organizations. American Legion Posts should bring the rules and diagrams contained in this revised edition of the code to the attention of the schools and citizens generally[152]

This codification and subsequent revision of the Flag Code was important to postwar American memorialization because it was borne of a trend that became popular during the war years. The American flag had been incorporated in local customs since the Decoration Days of the 1870s. However, it became an increasingly accessible and important symbol to citizens as a personal display of patriotism during the war. After the war, it evolved into an action for private citizens to emulate military practices. The American Legion distributed these pamphlets to encourage private citizens to follow military protocol, even on their own private property. This essence of militarism and decorum proved that revitalized memorialization meant incorporating standards of military honor. American men died under the cause of the Star Spangled Banner. In the aftermath of their sacrifice, it was the duty of citizens to honor the flag and their fallen men with respect. The U.S. government and the American Legion scaffolded this new form of symbolic patriotism and memorial with informational pamphlets and clear codes, insisting the American flag's treatment was one of propriety and respect as the nation headed into the unknown future.

[151] "Flag of the United States: The Living Symbol of Our Great Republic: How to Display It, How to Respect It." (The American Legion, n.d.).

[152] Ibid.

The image of the red poppy derives from John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders Field," one of the most famous poetic odes to the Great War. In the years following World War I, the symbol of the red poppy functioned largely in Great Britain. In America, it was the American Legion which championed the flower and aimed to embed the symbol in American memorial practices. In 1920, the Legion adopted the flower as their own symbol; in 1924, the Legion organized to make the poppies a national emblem.[153] As part of this undertaking, the Legion had to present the poppy to the people in towns. In the town of Wrentham, records demonstrate nearly every May an effort to distribute and sell poppies to citizens.[154] It was fundraisers – which for the pittance of funds raised from these sales, were clearly more of symbolic purpose than financial – like the Poppy sales that united the American Legion with the town. The American Legion Auxiliary and Boy Scout Troops worked with the Legion to promote sales and heighten awareness of Memorial Day ceremonies. The poppies of the American Legion encapsulated several goals of post-World War I memorialization: first, it was an icon of international importance; second, it allowed individuals to show their commitment to their fallen men; and lastly, it brought together a wide range of community involvement that made the grieving process of the Great War communal. In the midst of a society filled with voids of fallen soldiers and imaginings of distant battlefields, the American Legion and the poppy turned the memorial process into something tangible, productive, and shouldered together by the community of a small town.

After the war, nations, states, universities, and towns began the process of building war monuments for the sacrifices made during 1917-1918. On a worldwide scale, one of the most

[153] Editors at Legion.org, "The Poppy Story | The American Legion."
[154] "Auxiliary Ledger," c. 1920-1990, Wrentham American Legion Archives.

famous Great War memorials was the Cenotaph in Great Britain. The Cenotaph marked a change in war memorialization. Prior to the Great War, memorials glorified war, commonly seen as strong men on brazen horseback. Great Britain set the tone for Great War memorials when it produced a simple stone as the nation's memorial to its loss. War was to be memorialized, but it was not to be glorified. The world war opened many eyes to the true nature of warfare. It this war, boys faced the atrocities of modern technology. Therefore, in the aftermath, Great Britain chose a simple stone for a fallen soldier, representative of the solemn sacrifice made by the soldiers of the Great War.

Like many of the patterns discussed in this thesis, the happenings on the national and worldwide scale trickled into the ways of small towns. Towns too desired memorials for their contribution to the war. However, they had to decide what kind of memorial was fitting in a modern world. The American Legion played a role in the decision for the town of Wrentham.

Figure 7: Town of Wrentham Civil War Memorial Statue. Built 1915; Photo 2022.

In terms of past precedent, the Monument Association erected the Civil War Memorial of Wrentham in 1915. The statue displayed a Union soldier atop a stone base. On the sides of the base, a plaque listed the names of Wrentham's Civil War veterans. Inscribed on the front read "In Memory of the Brave Men of the Army and Navy Who Answered Their Country's Call."[155] The solider stood not in the act of battle, but staring into the distance of the town with his weapon in his hands. It marked the beginning of a

[155] Town of Wrentham, Civil War Memorial Statue.

transition in the perception of war, for while it displayed a soldier in all his wise grandeur, it also paid tribute to servicemen individually. Its inscription contains references to glorious warfare, phrasing the sacrifice of soldiers as answering, "their country's call."[156] The Civil War Memorial of Wrentham was a visually symbolic representation of the community's sentiments towards war. Just before the entry of the U.S. into WWI, the town of Wrentham viewed war with solemnity and with overarching calls to honor and glory.

In terms of national precedent, the town of Wrentham followed suit and decided upon a Great War memorial that did not depict a soldier in action. The town chose a bronze flagstaff. Sitting in the center of town, the flagstaff was rooted in a strong base that rose several yards into the air, with a large Star Spangled Banner emerging from a solid white pole. At the bronze base read an inscription and the list of servicemen in the war. The inscription stated, "Dedicated to the Citizens of Wrentham Who Served in the World War."[157] This inscription differed from that of the Civil War memorial. First, its dedication was specific to the citizens of Wrentham. Memorialization was again localized, and personalized. The image of the American flag continued to be prevalent in everyday common society. Today, the World War I flagstaff sits amidst a busy intersection.

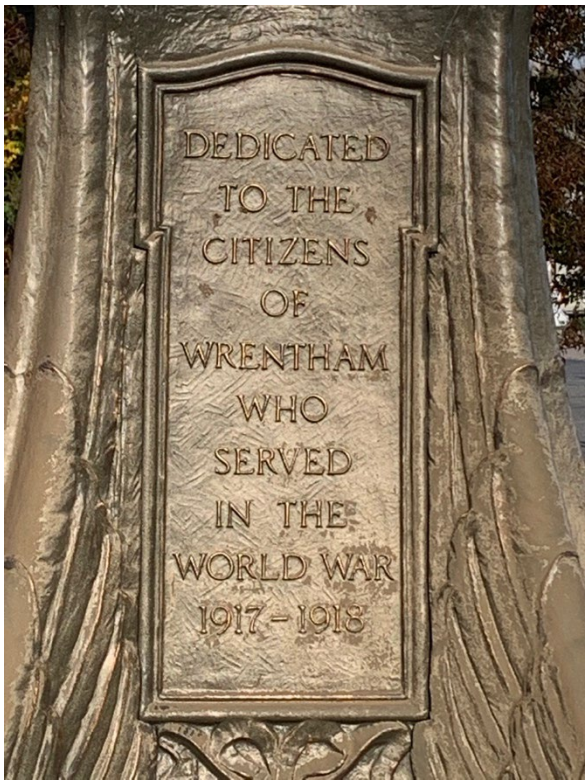

Figure 8: Town of Wrentham World I War Memorial Flagstaff. Built 1919; Photo 2022.

[156] Town of Wrentham, Civil War Memorial Statue.
[157] Town of Wrentham, World War I War Memorial Flagstaff.

However, it remains one of the tallest structures in the town's center square. The contributors of the local Great War memorial did not know what world they were heading into, but they knew that they would be influential in the course of military memorialization in the modern world. Their creation still stands proud in the town of Wrentham, serving as an everlasting symbolic representation of worldwide solemnity and local sacrifice for the Great War.

Not all citizens could serve in the war, nor could they be members of the American Legion in its aftermath. Therefore, the revitalization of symbolism was even more important after the Great War so that all members of society, even in small towns, could partake in memorialization. National and international leaders ensured that it was done properly with honor and solemnity, setting expectations for flag display or monument building. Local towns took on those responsibilities and used the symbols of the Great War as motifs of remembrance in the postwar world.

"Veterans of All Wars"

Memorial Day after the Great War

Local towns established Memorial Day as a hallmark of communal remembrance and commemoration. After the Civil War, Memorial Day stood for national unity, local bereavement, and new traditions. During the Great War, Memorial Day was an evolution from the traditional to the modern world – passive to active patriotism, changing symbols of nationalism, and refocusing wartime sentiments. After the war, Memorial Day became a holiday of great renowned for its specific remembrance for the Great War, inclusion of veterans from multiple wars, and continued intersectionality of community members.

The archives of the Wrentham American Legion and the *Attleboro Sun Chronicle* documented various Memorial Days from 1919 to the present. This section focuses on Memorial Days of the Interwar Years of 1919-1939. Specifically, 1919, 1928, and 1939: 1919 as the first postwar Memorial Day, 1928 as a halfway mark between the Great War and the Second World War, and 1939 as the final Memorial Day before the world descended into world war once again. Throughout the postwar recovery decades, the town of Wrentham rallied to commemorate its past and safeguard its future. Memorialization found Memorial Day to be the ultimate shrine to remembrance and ceremony, and the local records of the day proved it was greatly altered by the Great War, forever changing traditions memorialization for the modern world.

Memorial Day 1919 marked the beginning of the holiday's future in a changed world. In Wrentham, the day was interconnected with the Welcome Home ceremony for World War I soldiers. In the town of Attleboro, however, *The Sun Chronicle* recapitulated the day with strong emphasis on the inclusivity of Memorial Day for veterans of all wars, the development of veteran organizations, and the revitalization of old rituals. Overall, the town recognized the holiday's improved importance and solemnity because of these changes.

Remembering Memorial Day prior to the Great War, it was a holiday mainly dedicated to Civil War veterans. However, *The Sun Chronicle* published an article on May 31, 1919, entitled "Veterans of Three Wars Pay Tribute to Dead on Ideal Memorial Day," continuing more specifically to say, "the veterans of the Civil war, of the Spanish-American war and of the recent world war."[158] The town prided itself on "the most perfect Memorial day…that the city ha[d] known in years" because of the number of participants.[159] The first postwar Memorial Day in

[158] "Veterans of Three Wars Pay Tribute to Dead on Ideal Memorial Day," *The Attleboro Sun Chronicle,* May 31, 1919.

[159] Ibid.

Attleboro was for unity and memorialization across generations. It was this display of communal veteran involvement and unity in peacetime that made the town feel it had the greatest Memorial Day yet.

Interestingly, the *Sun Chronicle* did not include the American Legion under their list of participants; in fact, it directly negated its existence in the town. The article listed other veterans and their corresponding organizations, like those of the Civil War – "automobiles containing members of William A. Streeter Post, G.A.R."[160] However, the article listed the Great War veterans in the procession as "Veterans of the world war, unattached to any organization."[161] It appeared as though the town's Great War veterans, unlike those of Wrentham, had not yet formed ties an official organization. However, the town recognized veterans of the Great War as a cohesive and existing unit of men, once again proving the manner in which hometowns valued the men who returned home to them.

The last piece of evidence to be gleaned from Attleboro's 1919 Memorial Day proceedings was the aspects of the day itself, and its similarities and differences to prewar Memorial Days. In accordance with tradition, this day included members of the town of all ages, from all organizations, and all demographics. Referring back to previous analysis, the inclusion of automobiles solely for G.A.R. veterans indicated once again the vast range of veteran inclusion, for automobiles were likely provided due to the age of most Civil War veterans. Memorial Day continued to stand as a day of community gathering and connection as they remembered the sacrifices of their fellow citizens. Also, this Memorial Day still included tradition songs of memorials and the ever present "'America' by the assemblage."[162] However,

[160] "Veterans of Three Wars Pay Tribute to Dead on Ideal Memorial Day," May 31, 1919.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.

the program also included General Logan's Memorial Day Order and a song entitled, *Laddie in Khaki*.[163] The inclusion of the General Order suggested that the town valued how long it had practiced memorialization. The new song, *Laddie in Khaki*, was a 1915 wartime song about a women waiting for her soldier to return.[164] It was a fitting contribution to Memorial Day 1919 because many men had returned home to their community.

Overall, Memorial Day 1919 in the town of Attleboro stood for a new kind of memorialization. While American respected and appreciated their past precedent, including specifics and rhythms of past ritual, this recapitulation of the day indicated a revitalized sentiment to the day. With the new influx of lost soldiers and returning veterans, Memorial Day 1919 celebrated American and local war history, remembering the souls of those long gone and recently passed, and the service of those from many decades ago and just a few months prior.

A decade later, *The Sun Chronicle* published its recapitulation of its 1928 Memorial Day services. It stated, "Observance of Memorial Sunday was conducted by members of the GAR jointly with other patriotic and veterans organizations yesterday…the church was filled to capacity…[the speaker] paid highest tribute to the veterans of all wars for the sacrifices they had made for their country."[165] In accordance with tradition, local towns prided themselves on Memorial Day services of high attendance and intertown cooperation. Further, in accordance with the precedent of the early postwar Memorial Days, *The Sun Chronicle* documented the participation of many veteran organizations. The article gives more attention to the G.A.R. than the American Legion, but the Legion "joined in the service" and presumably were among "the various other veterans' organizations" that "visited the cemeteries and began the work of

[163] "Veterans of Three Wars Pay Tribute to Dead on Ideal Memorial Day," May 31, 1919.

[164] "Laddie in Khaki (the Girl Who Waits at Home)" (Chappell & Co., Ltd., 1915), Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection at Johns Hopkins University Libraries.

[165] "Pay Memorial Sunday Tribute," *Dedham Transcript,* May 28, 1928.

decorating the graves of their departed comrades."[166] In the new world, Memorial Day incorporated a wide range of veterans and dedications. In some towns, like Attleboro, it seemed there was a lingering emphasis on Civil War remembrance leftover from prewar traditions. However, overarchingly, this recapitulation of Memorial Day 1928 stood as a testament to the revitalized importance of veteran inclusion. In the years after the Great War, towns valued all military sacrifices in all wars across American history.

In 1939, the world faced another war of mass decimation and cruelty. Memorial Day had served for two decades a time for the veterans of the Great War to revitalize national and local practices. Then, only a few months before the beginning of the Second World War and a few years before the involvement of the United States, Great War fathers had a final chance to memorialize their war and set the stage for the war they were about to send their sons into. The Wrentham Legion documented the proceedings in their own records. One of the most apparent characteristics of Memorial Day 1938 was the cooperation of the Wrentham post with its neighboring town Plainville. The day began at the Plainville headquarters and ended in Wrentham, where the Legions held "Memorial Exercises in accordance with the GAR Ritual" at Plainville and Wrentham cemeteries.[167] The Legion took on the challenge of Memorial Day, but valued the work of their predecessor in establishing rituals. However, the Legion also expanded the work of their predecessor. For example, the "Order of March" included "Civil War Veterans," "Spanish War Veterans," "American Legion," and "American Legion Auxiliary."[168] *The Sun Chronicle* in 1919 framed the image of Norfolk County's postwar Memorial Day values, and the value of all veterans presented itself year after year. This report from the

[166] "Pay Memorial Sunday Tribute," May 28, 1928.

[167] Howard B. Parker and Elliott E. McDowell, "Memorial Exercises. Tuesday, May 30, 1939: Order of the Day"" (American Legion Post #225, May 1939), 4.

[168] Ibid, 2.

Wrentham American Legion included prewar precedents, directly stated as "GAR Ritual" and indirectly known as intertown cooperation and ceremonial traditions.[169] However, it revitalized the ceremony by including all veterans in the holiday. Memorial Day 1939 may be the last in the category of post-WWI Memorial Days, but those two decades stand as the holidays that changed American memorialization to an all-encompassing day of thanksgiving and remembrance.

Memorial Day was an American ritual for half a century before the Great War, and it established itself in local communities as a day of solidarity and remembrance. After the Great War, local towns and organization revitalized its existence to incorporate veterans of all wars. Twenty Memorial Days stood between the Great War and the Second World War, and the holidays of 1919, 1928, and 1939 were hallmarks of progression overtime. With the revitalization brought through soldier services, the American Legion, and symbolic representations, Memorial Day stood as the most reliable and powerful testament of memorialization in the towns of Norfolk County. The postwar Memorial Days set a new precedent for the new, modern world – one where the sacrifices of servicemen across the nation's history were never forgotten by the local communities they called home.

Chapter Conclusion

After the Great War, communities revitalized memorial and remembrance. Beginning immediately after the war, towns welcomed home their surviving veterans and their fallen soldiers with individual, personal recognition. Local veterans established posts for the American Legion, ensuring towns had leaders responsible for the propriety of remembrance services.

[169] Parker and McDowell, 4.

Further, postwar memorialization appeared in temporary and permanent symbols of remembrance. And as always, Memorial Day served as a day of solemnity and commemoration.

The Great War annihilated the world population and propelled its shocked survivors into a modern world. Nations dealt with that situation as best they could, but local communities are to be given credit for their recuperation and memorialization. The towns of Norfolk County relied on the precedent they knew and the evolution they had been through, and ultimately revitalized their practices to carry the old and new memories of war. After all they had endured, the collateral beauty of memorialization allowed veterans and citizens alike to cope in the new, modern, unknown world. It was no small feat. Yet, the efforts and care the common man put into community remembrance provided structure, solemnity, and strength to the next generations of Americans. Every grave of a soldier, every monument in the square, and every passing Memorial Day is the honor and spirit of American communities after the Great War.

Epilogue

This research pauses on the eve of the Second World War, which undoubtedly brought further change to memorial practices. However, in continuance with the argument of this thesis, the Great War was a definitive watershed in the development of American memorial traditions. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, practices like Memorial Day, symbols like poppies, the flag, and monument, and organizations like the American Legion continued as they had in the revitalization of collective practices after the Great War. As the United States and small-town families faced more overseas warfare, they remembered sacrifice with community, dedication, and memorial.

Today, in Wrentham, Massachusetts, the Memorial Day ceremony occurs each year. Led by American Legion Post 225, the day includes a parade with town political and religious leaders, the high school band, the Boy and Girl scouts, and veterans. Then, the town joins together at the Center Cemetery for a ceremony of prayer, speeches, individual recognition of soldiers, memorial music, and remembrance of all wars. The ceremony, in the 1860s, the 1910s, and the 2020s, is filled with solemnity, honor, and remembrance. Each year, traditions last and prevail because of the dedication and meaning put into these practices by the town's ancestors.

I attend this ceremony every year, even participating in the parade each year as a young girl. Through this research, I had the opportunity to tell the story of ordinary people who created an extraordinary thing. Memory is a difficult concept to prevail across time, but the memorialization practices of small town Massachusetts successfully achieved that preciseness and preciousness of memory. Whether they knew it or not, the work, dedication, and care post-World War I society put into their memorial practices changed American memorialization, lasting a century later with sentiment, tradition, and honor.

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