

Washburn in the Great War - peace at last

While the armistice on November 11, 1918 ended the fighting, it did not end the war. That was accomplished by the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, signed on June 28, 1919. Germany believed that it would be treated in accordance with President Woodrow Wilson's idealistic Fourteen Points, but instead was forced to accept harsh and punitive treaty terms imposed by the French and British.

Thus were sown the seeds for an even more terrible war, to be fought by the sons of the veterans of the Great War. President Woodrow Wilson returned home to begin the process of securing Senate ratification of the treaty and the covenant of the League of Nations, his plan for an international organization to preserve world peace. Despite a strenuous campaign, he was unable to gain public support for the treaty and covenant, both of which were rejected by the Senate in November 1919. Another effort in March 1920 to secure Senate ratification of the treaty and covenant also failed. In July 1921 the United States signed a separate peace treaty with Germany, formally ending the state of war between the two nations.

Just as they had celebrated their departure, the people of

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Washburn turned to welcoming home their "soldier boys." The first event was a dinner program at the Methodist Church on June 18, 1919, followed by a dancing party for the "boys" and their "sweethearts" at the opera hall. Then at the end of June the county board sponsored a "monster Bayfield County homecoming celebration to welcome home the boys in khaki and blue who left their homes and everything else dear to them to fight in a foreign land that the world might be made safe for democracy."

The celebration began on Friday afternoon, June 27, with a military parade of soldiers, sailors and marines in uniform, along with bands, chapters of various organizations, flag bearers and "appropriate floats." After the parade, a program was held at the courthouse square with band and vocal music and speeches, while in the evening there was a band concert and a street dance. On Saturday afternoon there was

a baseball game between two teams of soldiers representing Washburn and Bayfield, followed by a formal guard mount, a military ceremony, put on by the soldiers, which the times described as "a beautiful affair." On Sunday morning a religious service was held at the courthouse square, with music by two bands, and hymns sung by a combined church chorus, while sermons were delivered by the Catholic priest and a Protestant minister.

In 1919 President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation designating November 11 as Armistice Day (now Veteran's Day). Washburn held a half-day celebration, beginning with a parade, followed by programs of music, speeches, movies and other activities at the Temple Theater and the new DuPont Y.M.C.A. In late afternoon auto races were held on Bayfield Street, between Washington Avenue and Sixth Avenue West, the Times noting that "there were three entries, the speed averaging more than 50 miles" per hour. The celebration concluded with an evening program with speeches and a community sing at the Y.M.C.A., followed by a dance.

While the war was over, there were a few war-related issues that continued into the post-war years. Aliens were still under suspicion, but now it was radicals, revolutionar-

ies and communists, rather than Germans, who were the target. The county board, anxious to appear alert to the "red scare" mania that was sweeping the country, passed a resolution to deny county employment to any person who was not a citizen. The Times approved, noting that "it is time to get rid of the people who refuse to go through the melting pot with others and this is one way to help the matter." At the request of Herbert Hoover, the federal "food czar," Washburn residents observed food conservation week from December 1 to 7, to help fulfill the government's pledge to provide food for Europe's starving millions. To save electricity and fuel the United States went on daylight saving time in March 1918. Farmers were adamantly opposed to the law, however, and in 1919 Congress repealed it. President Wilson vetoed the bill, but it was finally passed over his veto, ending daylight saving time in October 1919 (until World War II).

The most enduring reminder of the Great War was a German artillery piece, displayed prominently on the west courthouse square lawn. Its historical significance haven been forgotten, the "hun gun" fell victim to a World War II scrap drive.