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# Lawrence and World War I

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# Lawrence and World War I

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Intro: Why this topic? It's the centennial. Also, this is an era that is less well known in popular US history and consequently less well known in our own institution's history, but a lot was going on and it's interesting.

## Timeline/Context

- Summer 1914: war begins in Europe, U.S. declares neutrality
  - Major Central Powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary
  - Major Allied Powers: Great Britain, France, Russia (until 1917)
- April, 1917: U.S. enters the war
  - Selective Service Act of 1917 registered men aged 21-30
  - Revised August 1918 for men aged 18-45
- November 11, 1918: Armistice signed, ending the war
  - 4 million men had served in US Army, 800,000 in other branches.
  - 360,000 casualties, 126,000 killed in action
  - Total deaths: at least 9.4 million soldiers, millions of civilians



This presentation will focus on the war's effects at Lawrence, and not the war itself. But here's some basic context...This was famously called by H. G. Wells "the war that will end war." Instead of doing that, it introduced new technologies for mass destruction – including chemical weapons and airborne bombing.



Lawrence campus from Brokaw roof, circa 1911





*"I have been thinking what we are going to do because of the very serious rise in prices..."*

*Soups are always filling, satisfying and inexpensive. Fill them up with soups! Water is cheap, the river still runs...Also the old-fashioned oatmeal is still cheap. Corn bread is wholesome. A good many people like it, and cornmeal has not risen seriously."*

Pres. Samuel Plantz to Jessie King, Ormsby Hall matron, November 23, 1916



1910s at Lawrence: Samuel Plantz had been president since 1894 (remained so until death in 1924.) This was a period of growth for Lawrence in pretty much every way – enrollment, endowment, physical campus – the war interrupted this. Plantz did a lot more as president than a college president today would do – we can learn a lot about what the war period was like at Lawrence by looking through his papers, reports and letters.

For example: Rise in food prices. Plantz says "fill them up with soups!" (Nov 23, 1916) Earlier in 1916, Plantz had bought "a carload of flour, several thousand pounds of sugar, a carload of potatoes, and a large supply of coffee" that lasted the whole 1916-1917 academic year.

THE WAR AND NEXT YEAR.

The war situation is going to seriously affect next year's work. We have already felt its effects. Between 40 and 50 of our boys have either already enlisted, gone into army Y.M.C.A. work, or entered upon some form of service such as work in ship-yards, or on farms to assist production. We cannot get predict how seriously our attendance will be diminished next year, but in all probability we shall have at least 25% less men and probably some less girls. The government is doing everything it can to keep the colleges full, realizing that there will be great sacrifice of life among our college youth, since they are being drawn on largely for officers, ambulance and hospital work, the aviation corps, Y.M.C.A. secretaries, engineers, and many other forms of service. If people have failed to realize the

President  
Plantz annual  
report to  
trustees,  
June 1917



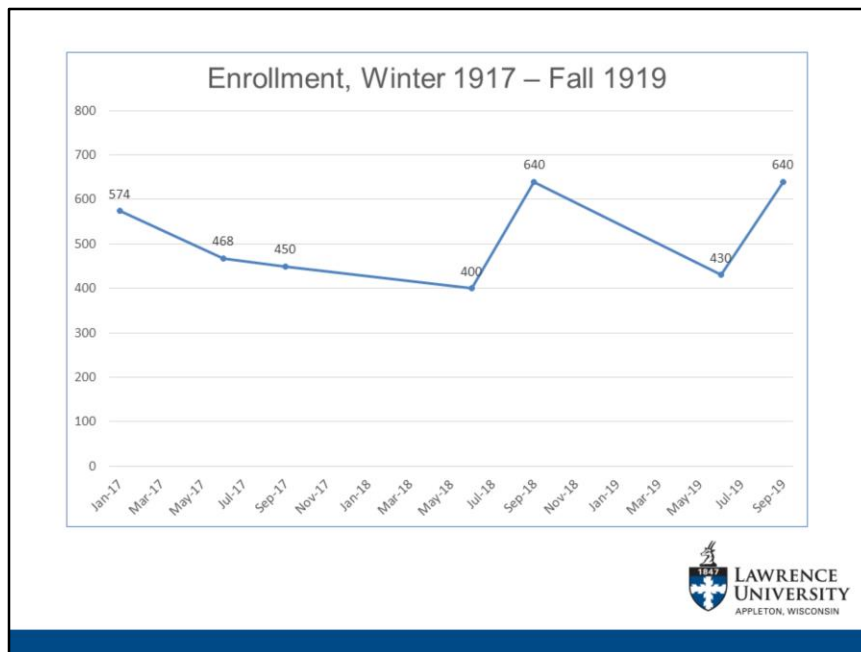
Academic year 1917-1918: This is an excerpt from Plantz's report to the trustees in June 1917 – concerns about enrollment. In the same report, Plantz lists some of the plans for the following year: Shortened the college year, October 1-May 30. No intercollegiate athletics, replaced regular physical education with mandatory military drill for men, social events diminished.

We have closed Peabody and Smith houses. Should we also close Brokaw Hall, if the men of the freshman class fall below 60 or 70? The building must have at least 75 residents to meet its expenses. Shall we close some recitation rooms and require several teachers to use the same room, so that all rooms used will be occupied each hour a day? Shall we close the library evenings thus saving light and heat? Shall we give up some departments of instruction and consolidate some others, and shall we decrease the number of courses offered and reduce the size of our teaching force? Shall we put in courses fitting students for war service, such courses as military science, food conservation, map drawing, military engineering, red cross and first aid work, commissary accounting, and conversational courses in French? Shall we close the

President  
Plantz annual  
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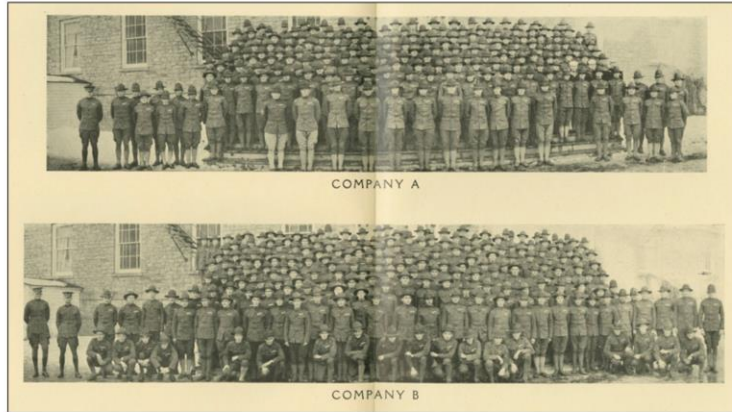
This is the report from the following year. Having made it through 1917-1918, things were now looking very dire. These are some of the measures Plantz proposed.



This shows enrollment from Winter 1917 (before the US entered the war) to Fall 1919. Students were already leaving before the declaration of war in April 1917. Not just joining the army or navy – many students left to work in industry or farming, or to serve with the YMCA. Enrollment was around 400-450 during 1917-1918. Reminder: August 1918 is when the draft age was lowered to 18. The US government recognized that this would decimate colleges and universities that were already struggling. So they established the Student Army Training Corps. Enrollment in October 1918: 400 SATC, 200 women, 30 civilian men.



# Student Army Training Corps



SATC Company A and B, as pictured in *Ariel* 1920



The military needed to train officers – using existing college facilities was efficient, and it saved colleges from closing. Lawrence received \$1.37/day for each student, basically covering tuition, room and board. There were 400 students who enlisted in this unit. This kept us afloat. More than 500 units nation-wide, coordinated by the War Department – these institutions basically became army posts.



From Donald Dyer Scrapbook, 1916-1921



Military personnel instructed the students in drill, discipline, and some other subjects, while the college was required to teach them a course in Aims and Issues of the War. Radically changed the operations of the college for at least those couple of months. Opened late (in October), calendar changed from two semesters to three quarters, Brokaw and Ormsby housed men in the unit, men marched from building to building.

## LAWRENCE IS ISOLATED UNIT SINCE QUARANTINE FOR INFLUENZA GOES INTO EFFECT THIS WEEK

When the order went out from the college office Monday afternoon revoking the clause of the quarantine concerning the exclusion of the town students, a general feeling of satisfaction went through college circles. Sunday morning, a general quarantine had been placed on all the girls in the dormitories because of the epidemic of Spanish influenza which has been causing so many deaths in the state.

No measures had been taken by Lawrence college toward closing the school until the state-wide order for the discontinuance of all activities was sent out on Saturday. Because the classes which the girls attend are also attended by the members of the S. A. T. C., it was thought best not to discontinue recitations.

Word Given Out Sunday

of the college dormitories and none have been announced since.

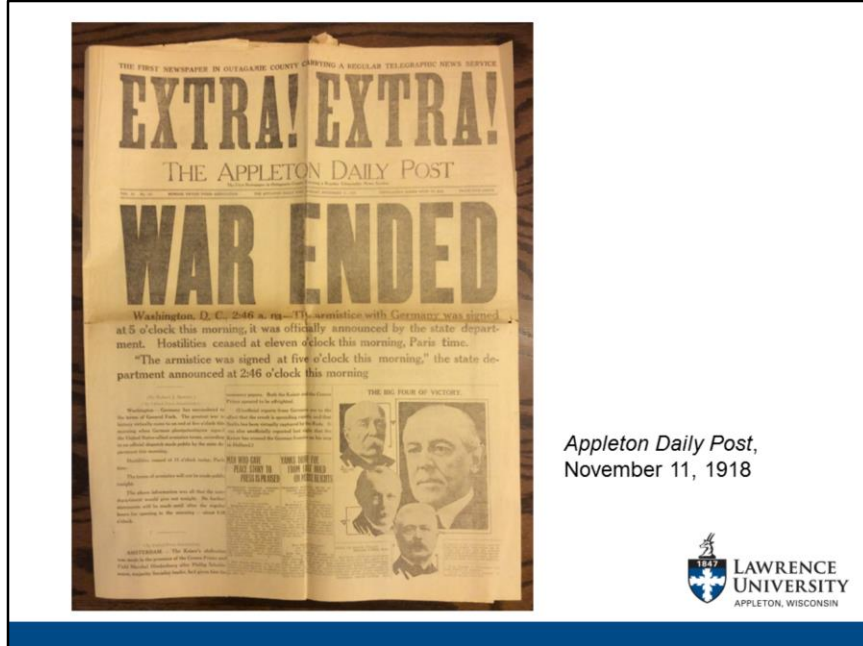
Town students were concerned on Sunday as to what would be the effect of the quarantine on them. They could not be in quarantine and remain in their homes. They were assured at the time that they would be allowed to attend classes on Monday at least, and final arrangements would be announced later.

Early Monday morning, Dr. Plantz posted notices to the effect that town students would not be allowed to attend classes until after the quarantine. Many of the town girls at once made arrangements to move into Russell Sage with friends and be under quarantine in order to attend their classes. By noon on Monday, the college authorities realized that fifty-six students who

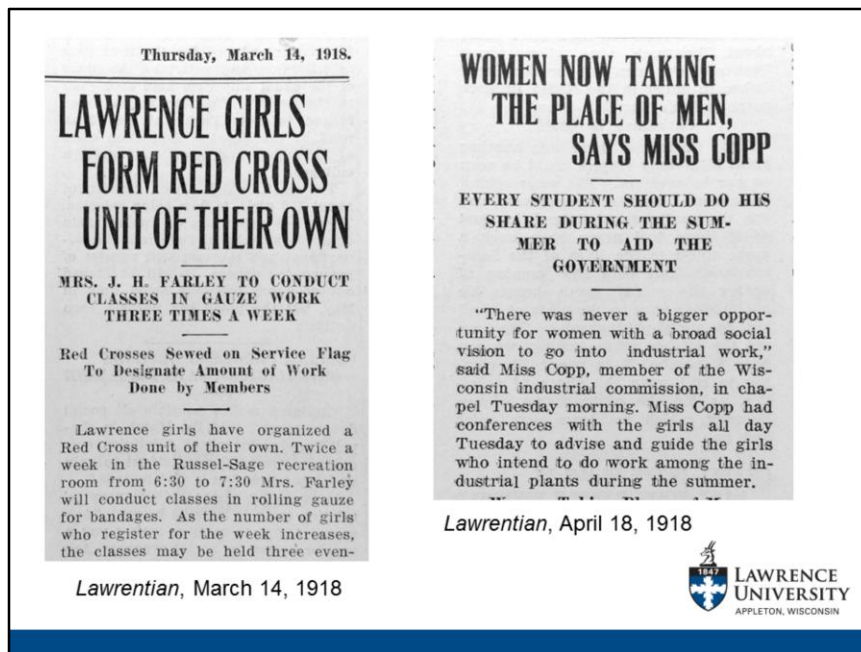
Lawrentian,  
October 24, 1918



Adding to the general sense of disorder that term was the Spanish flu epidemic. Infected over 100,000 Wisconsin residents and killed 8,459. In the middle of October, the State Health Board advised all local boards of health to “immediately close all schools, theaters, moving picture houses, other places of amusement and public gatherings for an indefinite period of time.” Lawrence got around closure by instituting a quarantine policy – students weren’t allowed to go off-campus, and students who lived in town weren’t allowed to visit the dorms.



So things were pretty chaotic for a few weeks, then the Armistice was signed. Signed at 5AM Paris time to go into effect at 11AM – this was early morning here in the states, so people woke up to this news, Monday morning. Classes were cancelled, and the city held a huge parade in which everyone participated. After the armistice, the War Department ordered that the SATC men be discharged in December – causing a bit of a panic, facing potential loss of thousands of dollars. Lawrence managed to keep some of the SATC men enrolled as students in the winter and spring.



To back up, this talk has so far emphasized the service of men in war work, but women on campus were also involved. Left headline: Red Cross work. Right: this predates the famous Rosie the Riveter of WWII, but the same idea. Women were needed to take up work in industry where men had left for war service.



Couple of images from a scrapbook by a woman student during these years, Grace Gates '20. Thrift stamps and liberty bonds – lots of pressure on everyone to buy these to support the Allied cause.



From Grace Gates Scrapbook, 1916-1920



## STUDENTS ORGANIZE A LOYALTY LEGION CHAPTER LAST TUESDAY

The Lawrence College chapter of the Loyalty Legion was organized by Judson G. Rosebush in chapel last Tuesday morning. Mr. Rosebush is the president of the state Loyalty Legion.

The officers elected for the Lawrence chapter are: President, C. Shoe-maker, vice-president, Helen Delbridge, secretary, Adolph Johnson and treasurer, Myron Umbrecht. The executive committee of three members will be chosen by the above named officers.

### Cards Given Out

After chapel cards were given to all students who were asked to sign the following pledge:

I hereby promise faithfully—  
To encourage enlistment in the army and navy.  
To uphold firmly the selective draft law.  
To protect the soldiers from abuse and attack of enemies at home.  
To aid in building up the fighting strength of the whole nation.

To seek out and bring traitors to punishment.

To hold slackers to public contempt.

To assist the government in carrying out its food and health policies.

To oppose all efforts to obtain undue profits at the expense of the government and the public.

To teach and to practice a broad vigorous American patriotism.

To stand boldly up for government by the people for law, for liberty, for justice, and for the square deal.

### 200 Chapters So Far

Thus far there are two hundred chapters of the Loyalty League in Wisconsin. The membership is approximately fifty thousand, but it is being steadily increased.

The most influential and perhaps best work done by the league is the distribution of literature. All the important presidential messages and news from Washington are being printed and circulated.

*Lawrentian,*  
March 21, 1918



There was a pervasive hyper-patriotism during these years. This Lawrentian article describes the formation of the Lawrence chapter of the Loyalty Legion. These are the things that signers of the pledge promised to do. Their goal was to sign up every student.



## **"LAWRENCE PROF. NOT PRO-GERMAN," SAYS DR. SAMUEL PLANTZ**

**LUDOLPH ARENS GIVES STATE-  
MENT PROVING HIS AMER-  
ICAN LOYALTY**

**(BY DR. S. PLANTZ)**

It has come to me repeatedly, and especially of late, that one of the professors of Lawrence College is pro-German in his sympathies and not loyal to the United States. I have felt that not much attention needed to be paid to such rumors in these times of suspicion when a German name, parentage, or former residence is sufficient ground for a challenge and where many are none too careful to be sure of their facts.

### **Rumors Current Among Students**

However, since I have learned recently that these rumors are becoming current among the students, I

## **Anti-German Sentiment**

Enrollment in German  
language courses:

- Fall 1916: 304
- Fall 1917: 158
- Fall 1918: 7

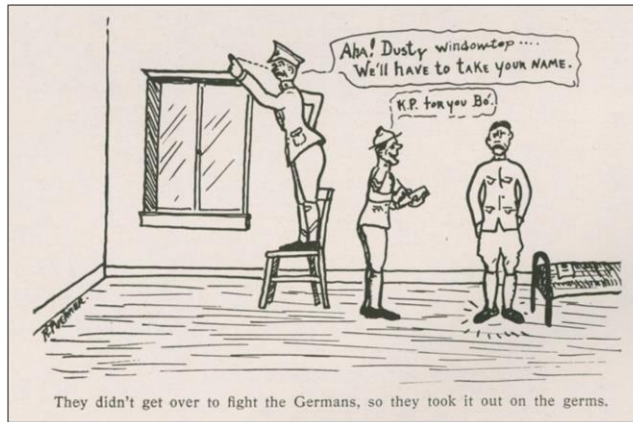
*Lawrentian*, May 9, 1918



This patriotism also resulted in Anti-German sentiment. Enrollments in German classes plummeted during these years. A German music professor, Ludolf Arens (1914-1925), was accused of pro-Germanism, resulting in this letter by Plantz in the *Lawrentian*. Plantz says that Arens had come to him when the war broke out to explain his sentiments – a year later, he provided Plantz with a written statement in case it was needed to refute charges. So this issue of the *Lawrentian* includes Arens' written statement, which is very eloquent and poignant.

This kind of sentiment was widespread, especially in Wisconsin where there were a large number of German-Americans, sometimes turned violent. Just a few weeks before this letter was published, a German professor at Northland College in Ashland had been tarred and feathered.

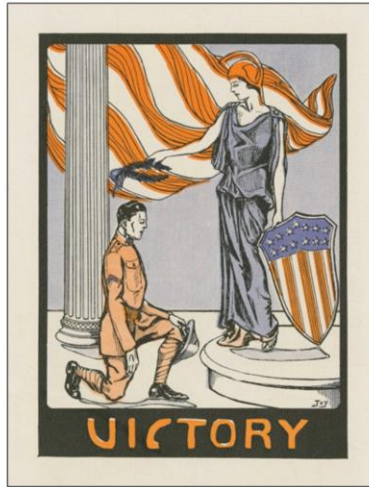
## Post War



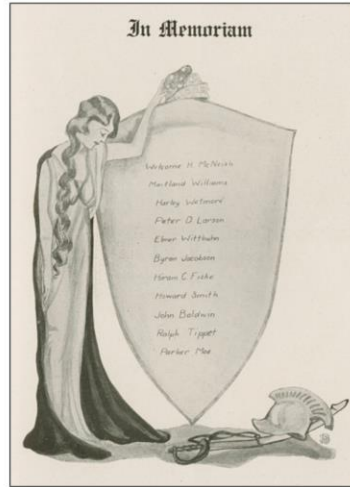
*Ariel* 1920



A bit about how the war was remembered/commemorated: The 1920 *Ariel* yearbook (which documents the 1918-1919 school year) includes a bunch of little comics like this one, poking fun at the fact that the SATC didn't really get to do anything.



*Ariel* 1921



The yearbook in the following year took a more reverent tone, with an extensive “roll of honor” section profiling Lawrentians killed and those who served in the war. Plantz wrote in intro to this yearbook (reflecting on 1919-1920 year): “One interesting feature of this student body is the fact that nearly a hundred men have seen service in the war, and know much of life’s experiences.” Privately, he was more explicit about what he meant: more drinking, smoking, “a great spirit of restlessness and an inclination to kick at everything.” “The morals of the service men were not improved by the war and many earnest Christian boys came back with reverence for religious things gone and their faith shaken.”



Memorial Chapel, circa 1935



The Memorial Chapel was dedicated in December 1918. The Chapel was being constructed throughout 1917-1918. It was dedicated in part to the memory of Helen Naylor and Myra Goodwin Plantz, and also to the Lawrentians killed in the war.

## Questions / Discussion

