

Centennial of The United States of America's Entrance Into World War I (A Medalllic Tribute)

by Richard C. Jewell

Finally after years of attempting to keep us out of the war in Europe President Woodrow Wilson on the 6th of April 1917 asked Congress to declare war on Germany. His patience having been exhausted in his dealings with the Imperial German Government and the American people having been stirred up by a series of incidents including the sinking of the Lusitania and the Zimmerman note, the time had come for America's entrance into the War to end all Wars.



The American Numismatic Society decided to commemorate America's entrance into the First World War with a medal. Eli Harvey (1860-1957) was commissioned and his *Declaration of War Medal, 1917* was the result. It was bronze, 3-1/2 inches in diameter, produced by the Medalllic Art Company, New York. It was to be a single sided piece with a large fierce looking Eagle with its wings spread, perched on a rock with the date APRIL 6, 1917 below. There were 113 issued in bronze and another 50 issued in silver.

French Premier Alexandre Ribot sent a mission to the United States soon after President Wilson asked Congress to declare war. The French Mission contained both political and military representatives of the Third Republic. Their reason for existence was to coordinate American participation in the Great War. The member of the mission, who stood out the most to the leaders of the Wilson Administration, the Congress and the U.S. Army, as well as the American people, was Marshall Joseph Joffre. For many Americans, Joffre personified both France and her Army as the "Hero of the Marne." The British, not to be out done by their French counterparts, also sent a similar contingent.

The British and French War Commissions Visit to New York City Medal, 1917, was another piece



sponsored by the American Numismatic Society. This time they commissioned Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) to the task. French's obverse was a very stylish allegorical head of Victory, much in the fashion that was popular on the European continent. It appears she is wearing a trench helmet to which a sprig of oak, a lily and a cluster of pine needles were added, as symbols of England, France and the United States, no doubt. The medal was bronze and had a diameter of 2-1/2 inches. The legend surrounding the rim reads: "TO

COMMEMORATE THE VISIT TO NEW YORK OF THE FRENCH AND BRITISH WAR COMMISSIONS 1917." The reverse design

was created by French's former assistant, and ANS member, Evelyn B. Longman. Her creation is modeled in a more streamlined, hard-edged style, but still features an allegorical configuration of



three figures. Joan of Arc represents France; a medieval knight represents England and a flowing draped Lady Liberty, with sword in hand representing the United States coming to the aid of all Europe.

General John J. Pershing Words at the Front Medal, 1918 was a medal by French medalist Charles Pillet. This bronze, 2-11/16inch, Monnaie de Paris piece captures General Pershing speaking with French Generals Petrain, Foch and Minister Clemenceau on the obverse with American troops marching past in the background. The reverse has a bold looking Rooster (France) at the bottom surrounded by stars all around the rim. A quote from General Pershing is in the middle: "THERE IS AT THIS TIME-NO OTHER QUESTION THAN-THAT OF FIGHTING-INFANTRY, ARTILLERY, AVIATION- ALL THAT WE HAVE ARE YOURS-TO DISPOSE OF AS YOU WILL-I HAVE COME TO SAY THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE- WOULD BE PROUD TO BE ENGAGED IN THE GREATEST-BATTLE IN HISTORY" General Pershing's words at the front-



With America's entrance into the war we were not thrown headlong into battles alone. Our Allies wanted to see our strengths and weaknesses. It wasn't until September 1918 that American forces acting independently at the Battle of St. Mihiel were victorious and captured over 13,000 German prisoners. To commemorate this triumph the Monnaie de Paris commissioned French sculptor Edouard Fraise (1830-1945) to produce a medal. To his credit Fraise's result was a mixture of allegory and harsh reality. His obverse design has an allegorical Lady Liberty holding the Stars and Stripes against her shoulder while overlooking a combative battlefield. The legend reads: "St. MIHIEL 1918." The medal was bronze, 67.7mm and issued by the Monnaie de Paris. The reverse depicts a map of St. Mihiel with a helmet, a shield and palms above it. Below it is inscribed 12 & 13 Sept. 1918. And the

remainder of the medal is divided into an English and French inscription: "The American Troops operating victoriously in the St. Mihiel Secteur broke the resistance of the enemy and captured 13,300 prisoners."



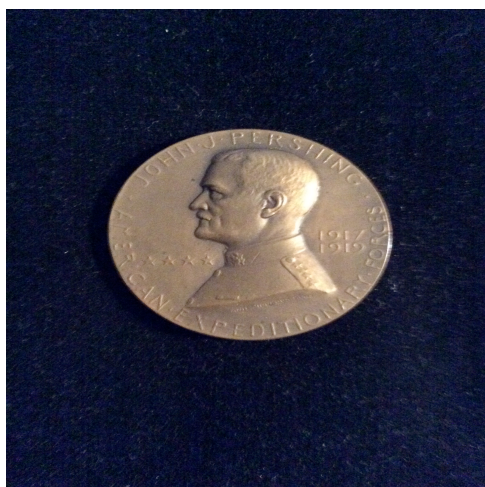
Around this period of time American sculptor Paulanship (1885-1966) had enough of German Karl Goetz' satirical and mocking medals and he decided to answer back with one satirical, mocking medal of his own, the result being *The Kultur*



in Belgium Medal, 1918. The bronze, 66.2mm, issued by the Medallie Art Company, N.Y. was a grotesque, mocking image of the Kaiser with a necklace of skulls, and a bayonet rifle in front of him. The legend around the rim: “THE FOE OF FREE PEOPLES”, in a cartouche below is inscribed “HIS ROSARY”

The reverse depicts a German soldier abducting a helpless Belgium woman with her lifeless child on the ground beneath them. Right above the child the sculptor Paul Manship has signed and dated the piece. The legend around the rim: “KULTUR. IN. BELGIUM,” below on a scroll: “MURDER PILLAGE”

John J. Pershing-American Expeditionary Forces 1917-1919 Medal, 1920



Anie Mouroux (1887-1978) designed her bronze, 1-1/2 inch, Monnaie de Paris medal in Paris France. The obverse features General Pershing facing left, his four stars are in front of him (Pershing was a Four Star General of the Army), and the dates he and his forces were in Europe 1917-1919 are behind him. Legend around the rim: “JOHN J. PERSHING, AMERICAN



EXPEDITIONARY FORCES.” Sculptor Anie Mouroux has signed her name & Paris beneath the bust. The reverse has a single star centered with rays shooting from it, with the dates 1917-1918 on either side. Beneath this is a quote attributed to General Pershing: “LAFAYETTE NOUS VOILA” (“LAFAYETTE WE ARE HERE”). A faux signature of Pershing is beneath the quote. Surrounding the rim is a double line of battles these American forces took part in (Cantigny- Bois-Belleau-Chateau- Thierry- St.Mihiel- Meuse-Argonne-Lorraine-Fere en Tardenois). This is a very small medal but one with a very large message!

The patriotism following the First World War brought many colleges, universities, cities, churches and Veteran groups to the realization that they needed to recognize the sacrifice our troops had made for their respective countries. The following is a small sample:

Sculptress Laura Gardin Fraser (1889-1966) was commissioned in 1920 by the Council of Churches of Christ in America to create a medal. It was called the *American Army and Navy Chaplains Medal*. It was a bronze piece, measuring 2-3/4 inches in diameter and was issued by the Gorham Company. The obverse shows a chaplain ministering to a wounded soldier on the battlefield. The simple legend reads: “1917-1918,” signed by Laura G Fraser 1920



behind the chaplain.

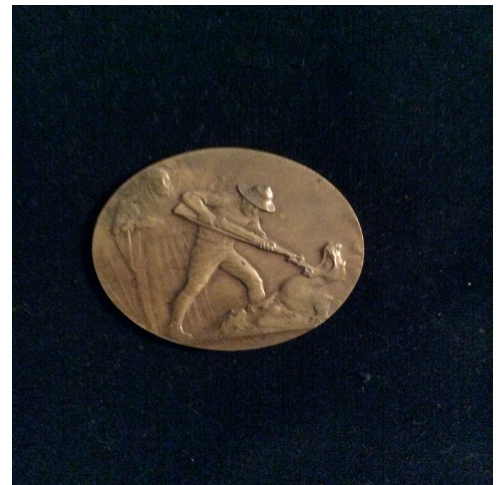
The reverse has a large cross superimposed over a naval battleship. The legend: "AWARDED TO THE CHAPLAINS OF THE AMERICAN ARMY AND NAVY / THE GENERAL WAR TIME COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES FEDERAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AMERICA."



Christian Petersen (1885-1961), Danish born, he emigrated to the United States with his family when he was nine years old. They settled in New Jersey and Christian, when his primary and secondary education was completed enrolled in the Newark Technical School where he learned the craft of die

cutting.

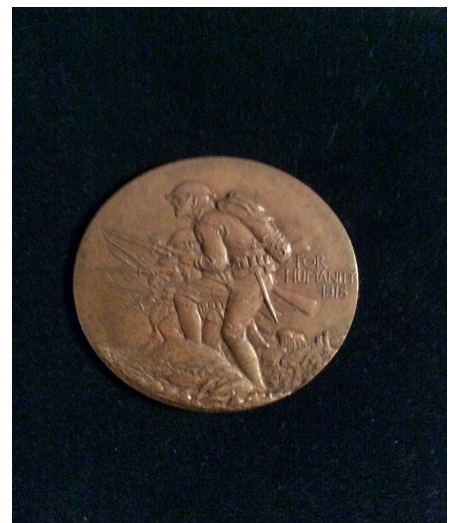
In the wake of World War I, Petersen received and completed numerous commissions for memorials and monuments, as well as portraits and plaques. He had learned a solid foundation from his mentor Henry Hudson Kitson (1865-1947) in the Beaux-Arts style that became popular in the United States during the nineteenth century. One such commission was the *Doughboy Medal*, ca. 1920. It is a bronze, 2-1/2 inches and issued by The Balfour Company, Attleboro. The obverse has a World War I doughboy bayoneting a dragon. The dragon had been mauling a female figure (Europe) beneath it. Behind the doughboy is a figure of Christ with one hand raised, overlooking and protecting, the sun's rays are in the background. This piece is uniface with only the manufacturers name incused on the reverse.



Williams College War Service Medal, 1918 by James Earle Fraser (1876-1953) was awarded to those who served in the War to End All Wars and had attended the college. Fraser's medal was 2-7/8 inches in diameter and issued by the Medallic Art Company, New York. The obverse depicts American doughboys brandishing bayonets as they emerge from a trench; legend at the right reads: "FOR HUMANITY 1918."



The reverse has an equestrian revolutionary army officer striding past a formation of soldiers; at the horse's front hoofs



is a small marker "LAKE GEORGE 1755." A legend around the upper edge reads: "E. LIBERALITATE. E. WILLIAMS. ARMICERI. 1793." Below in a recessed banner is the legend: "THE. WILLIAMS. MEDAL." The medal is unawarded and there are no edge markings.



Peace of Versailles Medal, 1919 by Chester Beach (1881-1956) was issued by the American Numismatic Society. It is a bronze medal, 2-1/2 inches and was manufactured by the Medallic Art Company, N.Y. The obverse has two allegorical female figures Peace and Victory, accompanying Justice astride a winged Pegasus. The reverse has laurel branches framing a Rising Sun over a distant palace (Versailles) with the legend: "PEACE OF VERSAILLES" positioned below the sun and the date 1919 is inscribed on a banner at the bottom.

These are just a few of the many World War I medals issued during or following the Great War to Save Civilization. Although the War may have ended a "Renaissance of the American medal," per Barbara Baxter, it did not stop the energy of the medalists of the world. If nothing else it opened the era of Art Deco and beyond. America would have Victor David Brenner for four more years, James Earle Fraser was here and doing some of his finest work as was his wife and fellow sculptor Larua Gardin Fraser, Julio Kilenyi was in the wings ready to become the next Brenner. Paul Manship was going to produce a few more medals in between his sculpture commissions, John Flanagan was continuing to design medals and coins, Anthony de Francisci was doing fine medallic work as well. America was in very capable hands and on the continent you had the likes of Godefroid Devreese in Belgium, Karl Goetz in Germany, Pierre Turin, Jules Prosper Legastelois, Alexandre Morlon, Marcel Dammann and Maurice Delannoy in France to carry on and influence the future of medallic art.