INTRODUCTION AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

In trying to recover a short part of the past life of Oberlin, I have relied heavily upon The Oberlin Review for factual data and insight into the atmosphere of the times. By spot-checking the other town newspapers, The Oberlin Tribune and The Oberlin News with The Review, I concluded that The Review is a reasonably reliable source.

To help construct the skeletal chronology of events I turned to other periodicals besides The Review. These included the Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer, The Oberlin College Alumni Magazine, and The Oberlin College Bulletin. These contained such valuable information as the nature of and the enrollment in college classes, geographical distribution of students, reports of the various departments, summaries of the events at Oberlin, and the college calendar. Secondary sources as Donald Love’s Henry Churchill King of Oberlin, the often inaccurate master’s thesis of Katherine Hyde, The Colleges and the World War, and Allan Bailey’s Mock Conventions in Oberlin—1860-1932 offered much supporting material and a few new insights.

I tried to capture the mood of the times to fill in the more skeletal chronology of events. In this effort I am heavily indebted to those Oberlin residents who were either students or professors here during the war whom I interviewed. These included Frederic Artz, Lawrence Cole, George Jones, Donald Love, Margaret Schauffler, and Clarence Ward. I have also used The Review editorials extensively to reveal prevalent campus opinions and moods and as one comment upon campus life. Indispensable for capturing the flavor of particular events were the "King Papers." Letters written by King to answer inquiries concerning the college and the war and letters from college officials to King, especially those from Karl Geiser and C. N. Cole, were
very helpful. Susan Zearing's index of the "King Papers," *The Letters and Papers of Henry Churchill King,* was a great timesaver in locating the relevant documents. Of lesser importance in discerning attitudes were the class letters and the annual reports and minutes of various organizations.

For the thought of the times, I gathered material from nearly every source. Henry Churchill King left behind extensive material in the form of addresses and letters. Edward Increase Bozworth's writing and his biography by Ernest Pye provided much insight into his thought concerning the war. *The Review* editorials, letters to the editor, articles in the *Alumni Magazine,* and the writings of Devere Allen provided additional material.

With so much data available it would seem easy to construct a well substantiated story. On the factual level this seems to have been the case. But on the level of motives, attitudes, and other such subjective considerations, the case is not so conclusive. *The Review,* though accurately reporting the events of campus life, may not present a true, well-rounded picture of "campus life." As *The Review* of today shows, it is hard to capture prevailing moods, much less the diversity of opinion, in a newspaper. How much weight can you place upon testimony given by people after nearly a fifty year lapse of time? What do individual comments show besides the opinions of isolated individuals? In the end, what can an historian validly say about such elusive, subjective matters? In considering these questions I have examined the data carefully and feel that there was a general consensus concerning the mood of the campus. Where consensus seemed evident I ventured a generality. Where these opinions did not fit into a pattern, I had to leave them as individual comments. Though, to a degree, I feel I have recreated the life of a segment
of the past, I realize that this success is only to a degree. I see the
gaps in my evidence and wonder what the uncovering of this evidence would
show.

If I had more time I would certainly seek to close some of these gaps.
Since my interviews with alumni of the war classes were helpful, I would seek
additional information from other living alumni and town residents of the age.
I would search out the personal remembrances and keepsakes of the participants.
I am sure that diaries, scrapbooks, and personal letters and papers would
prove valuable. Finally, I would investigate the college records more sys-
tematically and thoroughly, and seek to obtain access to such restricted files
as student records.

I necessarily restricted my endeavors to the years 1914-19 in order
to take advantage of the variety of resource material available on my topic.
If I had undertaken a longer time period or an enlarged topic, I would have
been forced to delve less deeply. Still I regret that I was unable to study
two very interesting questions. The first is the immediate post-war years
in Oberlin. A social rules fight broke out in 1919. What else changed in
Oberlin? Can these changes be traced to the war in any way? If so, how?
Was the mood parallel with the mood of the twenties throughout America?
A second area of interest is the comparison of Oberlin's reaction to the war
to that of other colleges and universities. Was Oberlin any different? I
have hinted that Oberlin's response was similar to the response of the country
with the possible moderating influence of its religious ethos.

All in all, I feel I have learned much about Oberlin College and about
the complexities and problems of doing historical research. This paper may
be irrelevant but it was fun and instructive in a very personal way.
Oberlin College during the First World War was a small, midwestern liberal arts college. The college contained three schools with approximately 1000 students in the college of arts and sciences, 375 students in the conservatory of music, and fifty students in the graduate school of theology. Oberlin, though having students from nearly every state and many foreign countries, drew about forty-five percent of its students from Ohio. The Christian spirit was dominant as evidenced by the required chapel four days a week, the strong YMCA and YWCA, the annual day of prayer, prayer week, and the strong missionary impulse. The student body was very homogeneous. This provided unity of spirit and purpose but concerned at least one professor, H. A. Miller, of the sociology department who expressed the view that:

"One problem is that of the remarkable uniformity of type of our students. . . . The geographic cosmopolitanism of Oberlin is merely the means of securing provincialism. I just had the pleasure of reading ninety odd autobiographies from one of my classes in which the social background was described. It was amazing how true to type they were. Middle class, large Protestant families with ideals and Christian purposes send their children to Oberlin to get good things in harmony with the family ideals. There is not a single person in that class from a family of wealth or distinction, and only one who comes from the industrial conflict."

Besides the Y's the strongest activities were the literary societies which sponsored speeches, essay writing, debates, etc. and men's intercollegiate athletics. The athletes were "big men on campus" in those days and were a very cliquish group. A major college scandal resulted from the expulsion of sixteen men, including the heart of the football team for continuing to belong to secret fraternities despite frequent warnings. Nearly half of the Oberlin graduates entered the teaching profession, many into the field of physical education, which Oberlin helped to pioneer. The college, as most church affiliated colleges of

1. Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer, 1915-16 (Oberlin, 1916), p. 196
that time, maintained strict social rules. Drinking, smoking, and dancing were strictly taboo, women's hours were tightly controlled, and men-women relations were closely chaperoned. In general, a spirit of cooperation pervaded the college life and students pursued their activities with but passing interest in the outside world.

The war broke out in August, 1914. The students, returning in September, seemed to only casually note this decisive turn of events. The first Oberlin Review on September 13, 1914 carried three football stories on the front page written by the coach, director of athletics, and captain, reports of the Y cabinet retreat, YMCA and YWCA plans, announcement of meetings of the Men's Senate and the Suffragists, and a summary of campus improvements. This issue, concerning the war, merely noted the inconvenience caused to touring Oberlinites in Europe but assured the reader that "the war did not seriously interfere with their pleasure." The first evidence of student awareness of the importance of the war was an editorial written by the editor of The Review, Carlton K. Matson on October 13, 1914. He urged that:

"To drop any two hour course in college would be preferable to living in this age of the world's greatest war and not have time to study the forces involved and to speculate of the causes and effects. College students are too liable to live in an academic atmosphere of curriculum courses, social functions, and football games. Across the sea they are making history.... Are we missing all this?"

Miss all this they did. No student dropped a two hour course for the war as they were to do less than three years later. College life was still saturated with curriculum courses, social functions, and football games. Football articles appeared invariably on page one, column one of The Review, as well as in the sports section. In 1916, the early issues of The Review were dotted with boxes which said "BTT". A later Review

2. The Oberlin Review, October 13, 1914
revealed that "ITM" meant "Behind That Team." That same year 150 students attended an early October football scrimmage and four hundred turned out for a bonfire. The Review carried frequent editorials on football, school spirit, and freshman beanies. The Y's were very active and had abundant membership. The Review lauded the Christmas Gospel teams which helped in local churches around Oberlin, praised the Day of Prayer as one of the great days of the college year, and carried editorials asking for reverence in chapel. Men's and women's stages were high spots on the social scene.

The war was a far off matter for the Oberlin student during these first two years of the conflict. His knowledge of the war was very limited. H.A. Miller, in a letter to the editor of May 21, 1915 entitled "Upperclassman Ignorance" commented that he asked one hundred students in two of his classes to identify Joffre (Commander and Chief of the French army) and Ypres (an embattled Belgian city). He reported that twenty of eighty women knew and eight of twenty men answered correctly. The same experiment by another professor, J. H. Kellogg, yielded similar results.3

With their limited knowledge of the war, the students at this time were mildly sympathetic toward the Allied cause, but were against the participation of the United States, and for toleration. They had, at this time, the disinterested perspective on the war which King and The Review among others were to urge three years later, only to have their exhortations drowned out by the war din. A bit of a stir resulted from the sinking of the Lusitania when Professor Karl Geiser of the department of political science defended the legal right of the Germans to sink the ship. This started a battle in the letters to the editor column between

3. The Oberlin Review, May 25, 1915
Geiser and another professor, Edward Dickinson. General sentiment seemed to favor Dickinson's affirmation "that there is a higher law than international law - a divine law, a law of justice and mercy." 4 This stand of Geiser's was later to create difficulties for him.

The Mock Convention of May 22-23, 1916 touched briefly on the war in its platform. One plank called for "a decisive mode of preparations, with an increased standing army and military training in schools. The navy should be increased in size second to that, in the powers of the world, of Great Britain." 5 In other activities the Mock Convention approved a prohibition plank, defeated a woman suffrage plank prepared by the separate women's suffragette convention, and narrowly nominated Theodore Roosevelt over Charles Evans Hughes on the seventh ballot. The Review reported that Henry Ford's strong run of sixty-four votes on the third ballot was partially an expression of opposition to "the ultra-militaristic platform." 6

The election of 1916 aroused lively campus campaigning. Yellow "Wilson for Peace" ribbons appeared around campus. In a straw vote ballot conducted by The Review, Wilson won on the "I'll keep us out of war" ticket, 523 to 472. 7

War activity came to Oberlin, finally, in November of 1916 in the form of an appeal of the international YMCA for prison camps in Europe. The town and college supported this humanitarian appeal by raising $3761.59 which placed Oberlin College fourth behind Yale, Williams, and Dartmouth.

The campus gradually became more aware of the war, but it was not until the break of diplomatic relations between Germany and the United States in February, 1917 that Oberlin seemed finally to awake to the fact that this

war was of great personal concern to them. In the February 9, 1917 issue of The Review Professors Geiser, Fullerton, and Lyman urged dispassionate and reasoned consideration and an attempt to avert entrance "into a conflict not their own". A petition circulated by C. Marvin '18 "lauded the President's diplomacy and assured him of the support of Oberlin students and faculty even to the eventualities of war." A Review editorial in this same issue reveals a remaining anti-war sentiment:

"We are firmly opposed to universal compulsory military training, to the mad rush for preparedness, to that militari-ism which many would foist onto the country. We are against this specific measure of military training because we believe that it tends toward militarism and militarism is worse than war."9

The Review and most of the town and college was soon to change its mind on this issue as they were to do on many other issues.

A suddenly interested campus expressed itself in the letters to the editor column of The Review in the following few weeks. The controversy revolved around the issues of the motives for American entrance into the war if it did enter. One viewpoint was the Americans would only fight "for the defense of America - American souls, American money, and American loyalty for America and America only."10. In response, another student suggested, "Certainly there are higher motives for war than self-defense. In these days we think in international terms - in terms of humanity."11. Discussion ensued primarily on the issues of U.S. entrance and military training in Oberlin. Each side had staunch adherents. A group of twenty students, mostly from the GST, formed a local chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in response to a speech by the English minister Leyton Richards which he delivered in Oberlin on November 24, 1916. This group, which met weekly, re-

---

responded to President Henry Churchill King's pro-war Lenten Address by issuing a statement that "war is a greater evil than any of the evils which have been by-products of this conflict." It further urged that the fault was not a black and white question and that the United States should stay out of war in order to work for peace through an international organization "for the securing of justice and cooperation in the advancement of civilization." On February 22, Dr. Ian Hannah of the GST gave a Washington's birthday address urging that it was the duty of the United States to keep out of the European war. On February 25 Eugene W. Lyman of the GST in a sermon at the First Church echoed this sentiment by stating that universal military training and American entrance into the war would not help the cause of democracy, world peace, Christianity, and social justice. Thus, just two months before the United States entered the war the anti-war sentiment in Oberlin was strong and vocal. The leader of this group, among the students, was H. Devere Allen.

Devere Allen '17 was the president of the local Wilson Club, member from the middle western states on the students' council of twelve of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, and secretary of the Anti-Militarism League. With a few other students Allen published a newspaper The Rational Patriot which first appeared on March 19, 1917 in order to offer a medium through which the peace sentiment in Oberlin could express itself and to express ideas in Oberlin which otherwise would not be aired. In its introduction entitled "About Ourselves" the editors said:

"We are a number of Oberlin men who believe that Peace is worth working for. We believe that the supreme challenge of the day to college men and women, as well as to all civilization, is the spirit of militarism, not alone as it is manifested in any single nation, but to greater or less degree in every nation in the world, including the United States.

12. The Oberlin Review, February 16, 1917
13. The Oberlin Review, February 27, 1917.
14. The Oberlin Review, February 27, 1917.
By militarism we mean the reliance on military force as the ultimate means of settling disputes. We call our paper "The Rational Patriot" because we believe the highest patriotism consists in working for a rational, rather than an instinctive, reaction to periods of extreme provocation."16.

The paper's motto was "Humanity First - America Leading". Its philosophy was based on the principles of Christian idealism and socialism. It held that war could not solve the world's problems and was itself the worst atrocity. Even if Germany were destroyed the world's problems would remain. The only way to solve the world's problems was to seek the causes of, publicize, and strive to eliminate the economic, racial, and internal maladjustments of society. The paper believed that "to employ warfare as a means of settling international grievances is unchristian, to justify it on Christian grounds is sophistry, to proclaim it as an instrument of Christian love is utter betrayal." It approved of Wilson's high ideals and urged that the people plan for the great reconstruction. Specifically, it criticized the "prostitute press" and the "Gott Strafe" services in Oberlin. Humorously, it directed its criticism of the former by stating: "Selfishly speaking, the best kind of war relief we can think of would be to stop reading The Plain Dealer."16.

Initially the town treated The Rational Patriot with tolerance. A Review editorial of March 20, 1917 said:

"The editors of the Rational Patriot have reason to congratulate themselves on the fine appearance of their sheet... We are glad to see a group of Oberlin men who believe hard enough in a cause to put into it what these men are... They ought at least to make us think and have reason for the opinions that we hold within us."17.

But this spirit of toleration towards anti-war views did not last long. The first issue of the paper carried ten town advertisements, the second, five. By the fourth issue in November, 1917 no town merchant would ad-

17. The Oberlin Review - March 20, 1917
advertise in The Rational Patriot. Opinion apparently turned against the paper just before the United States entered the war because in the April 6 issue of The Review, Allen is quoted as saying, "We have received many open as well as anonymous threats of violence, but we are not going to be turned aside." This opposition was going to get much more outspoken and angry during the remaining course of the war.

We have seen that anti-war sentiment flourished just a few short months before the American entry. But by the end of March, 1917 public opinion had turned against such opinion and the advocates of anti-war views had to keep them to themselves, alter them, or suffer the consequences at the hands of a pro-war town and college. All three options were exercised.

During these years of American non-involvement, Oberlin College was moving from a position of disinterested non-involvement in the war to passionate support for the allied cause. In this transition one of the greatest influences on student opinion was the presence and thought of the President of the college, Henry Churchill King. King, loved and respected by the students, faculty, and town, gripped this college as no president since has been able to do. A nationally known theologian as an author of numerous books and articles, and as a member or supporter of various national committees and organizations, King still maintained close involvement with his students. He taught Senior Bible, a required course for all seniors, instructed a Sunday morning Bible class whose subject soon became "The Moral Issues of the War", administered, with Edward Increase Bowser, Dean of the Graduate School of Theology, most of the required chapel services, gave the baccalaureate addresses and numerous other speeches to the student body, and met informally with many students at his home. Through these channels and because of his interested concern King was able to convey his ideas on the war to the student body.
The European war broke out while King was on a lecture tour of the West. He noted the factual happenings of the war in his pocket memorandum book and began to concern himself with the compatibility of this war with his Christian beliefs and to consider how he was to interpret the moral and ethical challenge of the war to his students.\(^\text{18}\).

President King organized his Sunday morning Bible Class in the fall of 1914 for a systematic study of the book of Matthew. But on October 18 he instructed on "The Moral Issues of the War." He continued this topic for the next two Sundays and on November 8 he ignored his scheduled discussion of Matthew 12:22-54, "A Study in Moral Blindness", and spoke, instead, on "Our Duty as Americans",\(^\text{19}\). From this time on, King utilized this important channel to convey his developing ideas of internationalism, a universal moral law, and the Christian conflict. At first, King tried to maintain a regular Bible study but at least by 1917, he was lecturing weekly to over two hundred students exclusively on the moral issue of the war.

Though the thoughts in King's addresses and writings changed slightly through the war years, the main theme remained consistent. In his baccalaureate address of June 11, 1916, "Citizens of a New Civilization", King stressed the irreconcilable conflict between the paganistic German philosophy of state and Christianity. He believed that this was a day of decision for mankind which would prove the sovereignty of God and would lead to a humbled and repentent civilization under a rule of law rather than a rule of violence. King urged the students to believe in the possibilities of "some true realization of the Kingdom of God on earth", accept the challenge of the day, and accept the obligations as citizens of the one

\(^\text{19}\) Love, p.193.
great neutral to relieve the suffering and the starving. In his Presidential greeting to the students and in the Senior chapel service in September, 1916, King developed these same themes. He urged the students to prove themselves worthy of peace "in this momentous year in the world's history, when more than half the world is involved in the most destructive war the race has ever seen." He called them to think internationally, to dedicate themselves to the demands of the new age and to have the Christianity of Christ which was capable of the sacrificial spirit. King had the "vision of the organic view of truth and of human society" in which every man, "in a world order plastic to man's molding as never before", could contribute to "that new dawning world of co-operating, mutually respecting nations". With this glowing hope for the future, King viewed this war as the last desperate, temporary measure to protect Christian civilization and to enforce a moral law on nations as well as on individuals. With reluctance he approved of the allied war against Germany with the faith that God would not allow such a great calamity to take place unless great gains were to result. He opposed a premature peace, though he considered himself a pacifist, because such a peace would only temporarily halt the German pagan philosophy. With this in mind he signed a declaration entitled "Peace Only With Honor" with sixty-one other clergymen in December, 1916.\(^\text{20}\)

Only very slowly and reluctantly did King realize that America's commitment in the war would lead to military involvement. In December,

1915, in response to a Review questionnaire on preparedness King did not oppose a moderate increase in defense but did oppose the creation of a citizen soldiery because of the militaristic mood involved. In a letter, Dr. Hiram W. Kellogg on February 26, 1917 King expressed his dislike for war and militarism and his opposition to the establishment of military training at Oberlin. But, the next sentence reveals the decisive force in King's mind. He felt that Wilson's decision to break diplomatic relations with Germany and the imminence of war "made a distinctly different situation for us all to recognize". He placed patriotism high and because he supported Wilson's ideals, he aimed to back the President wherever he led. This patriotic spirit and his firm Christian idealistic interpretation of the war led him easily to a vigorous support of the war when America entered.

Edward Increase Bosworth was another man who strongly spoke to the students on the war. He was dean of the Graduate School of Theology, instructed, with King, the Senior Bible course, assisted in the chapel services, and was acting President during King's absence in the school year 1918-19. With views similar to King's, Bosworth expressed his Christian liberal view of the war. He believed that a Christian "feels that by fighting he will help to create a situation in which the common fatherhood of God and the international brotherhood of all men will find more perfect expression". Bosworth added a new twist by considering that force was non-moral and that the disposition of the man using force determines its morality. Thus, a Christian could kill in love. It was this type of logic that Devere Allen denounced as pure sophistry.22.

These two great leaders preached disinterested concern, rational internationalism, and a war of high moral ideals not of hate. Though I cannot conclusively say, I think it safe to say that these two had a great role in molding

21. The Oberlin Review, December 17, 1915
student sentiment toward the war and did much to temper the emotional outbursts of hate and anti-Germanism that soon swept over the college.

Thus, by the early months of 1917 the war was a personal reality to Oberlin. The college offered lectures on the war with increasing frequency in the school year 1916-17 and the message shifted from non-involvement and the advocacy of a political organization of nations to one more definitely pro-war and pro-allies. Sentiment for military training was growing as Oberlin students referred to such training already underway in certain eastern schools. Peace sentiment was dying. An emotional patriotism was emerging in Oberlin that would not be rational, nor tolerant. By March, 1917 Oberlin was generally committed to the war and all that was necessary was the declaration of war to release the built-up tensions and set the community into feverish activity.

Woodrow Wilson sent his war message to Congress on April 1, 1917. On April 4 a mass patriotic meeting of the town and college assembled to hear speeches by Wilbur H. Phillips, Professor G. Walter Fiske of the GST, Wilford H. Evans, a college junior, and Henry Churchill King. The meeting passed resolutions condemning Germany and offering full support for the President. Professor Fiske exemplified a common sentiment when he said:

"A year ago we were all pacifists. We believed then that 'war was hell' and that our rule was the Golden Rule. Our Pacifism ends when our nation is endangered by a maniac country."

On April 5, the college faculty voted "to lend to the government any buildings, equipment, and faculty members that the war department can use". On the same date the college began enrollment for a military training course approved by the faculty on February 28. The faculty allowed each enrollee to drop any

three-hour elective, earning one credit, and then get two credits for military training which required three hours of classroom work and three hours of drill per week. By noon on April 6, 176 men had already signed up for the course. By April 6, also, about 200 women had responded to the call of the local Red Cross. With the official declaration of war on April 6, the college administration unanimously agreed to "stand squarely behind the President". Bosworth said he was in thorough accord with the President. Hannah said he still felt the United States should stay out but that he would support the decision of the majority. Geiser commented that now that the decision had been made it was the duty of every American to support the decision. The Review called for clear, rational thought over the issues of the war and urged each student to search his soul to determine his place in the war.24.

But, neither the town nor the college was in the mood for clear, rational thought. Two Review editorials of criticism and warning seem to show the emotional, irrational mood.

"In 1861 when war was declared, the bells of the town tolled for a half hour. The demonstration last week, to our mind, better befit a declaration of peace, than that for which it was intended. Do we have to keep up our courage and patriotism by brass bands and hurrahs? We are told that America enters the war with a full realization of its horrors and suffering. We wonder . . ."

"Can we then during the coming struggle keep our daily lives, all our actions upon that high level which all have assumed as we enter into the struggle? We cannot afford to let loose forces of hate within us land, among our own people. A campaign of persecution for honest opinion held, of scurrilous attack, is not the best way to begin. Certainly a college community ought to be free from the characteristics of a yellow journal. Let us be careful how we fling about such phrases as 'Kaiser's representatives', 'cowards, traitors', etc. Those are the easiest terms in which to speak.

"Perhaps after all it is too much to expect men to act always with reason and moderation in times of heat and passion. But at least let us try."

24. The Oberlin Tribune, April 6, 1917; The Oberlin Review, April 6, 1917
25. The Oberlin Review, April 10, 1917
The last two months of this school year were ones of upheaval in response to the war and near waste from an academic point of view. Three hundred and thirty-three men, which was seventy-five percent of the male enrollment dropped an academic elective and joined the military training units which began drills on April 13. One hundred and thirty-seven men successfully completed the course and most of the rest withdrew from school before the end of the year. Withdrawals were made inviting by a faculty decision to give full credit to those students who withdrew from a college course with a passing grade in order to participate in the national defense or farming. The first group of eleven men left by April 17 to join the naval Mosquito fleet, a coastal defense outfit. Six were sent off by a cheering crowd at the train station on April 16. By April 24, 77 had gone and by May 11, 179 students had left campus. Of these, 15 were women and well over half withdrew to do farm work. These students left for a variety of reasons. Some undoubtedly joined the war effort for carefully considered reasons. But, the majority responded to the call of patriotism, were swept along by the war hysteria and social pressure, sought the adventure and glory of war, or volunteered because they were tired of the routine of college classes. Review editorials of April 24 warned against the "everyone is doing it" motive for leaving and again urged rational thought. A letter from Henry Churchill King to Dr. Dan F. Bradley on April 14, 1917 described this same unrest:

"We have brot in this improvised training for the rest of the year to guard against too many of the men being swept off their feet suddenly and prematurely enlisting. Something of that kind it seemed absolutely essential to do if there were not to be a great deal of restlessness and unwise action."

The declaration of war also jarred the women's activities. At a mass meeting on April 12, between 700 and 800 women registered for Red Cross training. The faculty granted one credit for the completion of any one of

26. The Oberlin Review, April 13, April 17, April 24, May 11, 1917 Annual Reports, 1916-17, p.145
three Red Cross courses which were in first aid, dietetics, and surgical
dressings. Four hundred and seventy-two women completed one or more courses.
On May 1 and May 2 women enlisted into the college women's service. Under
this plan suggested by the Dean of Women, Florence Fitch, the women had to
sign a pledge for physical efficiency and service. Each enlistee agreed to
sleep eight hours each night, spend eight hours each day on curricular work,
economize in dress, regularize her diet, clean her room and submit it to in-
spection, and participate in one war activity. This seemed to serve as the
women's counterpart to the men's military training. The Women's League
-sponsored an "adopt a French orphan" campaign and by May, 1917 students
had pledged to support fifty-five French orphans for one year. The War Re-
lief Committee of the Women's League raised $200 by means of various sales
and activities. 27

Patriotism became the key word and anti-pacifism and anti-Germanism
flourished. Church attendants on Easter Sunday, April 8, wore the country's
colors in their lapels. As part of their drive, the War Relief Committee
sold small celluloid flags in the college and in a house-to-house canvass
with a goal to have every man, woman, and child in Oberlin wear "Old Glory"
on Friday, April 20. Opposition to The Rational Patriot steadily mounted.
Oberlin townspeople persuaded Oberlin and Elyria printers not to print the
paper. The Oberlin Tribune criticized the paper for not doing the duty of
every loyal American, which was "to stand back of President Wilson". Allen
remembers "the efforts to tar and feather us, the constant threats of assass-
ination, and other pleasant reminders that we might be more popular in the
community." The Review, in an editorial directed against pacifists stated

27. The Oberlin Review, April 13, April 20, 1917
Katherine Hyde, The World War and the Colleges (Oberlin, 1934) p.32.
that each person had the duty to serve in the war, whether as a belligerent or not, because there were lives to be saved as well as taken. This shift in public opinion may be highlighted by a letter to the editor of The Review, written by Dr. Ian Hannah on May 22. If you recall, Dr. Hannah had given an address in February urging the United States to stay out of the war. The letter in part reads:

"War and Christianity go together like God and the devil! Yet we cannot emphasize this point of view without embarrassing our government's efforts to destroy the Nietzschean theory of state which surely every Christian is bound to repudiate, resent, dislike, despise, hate, abhor, loathe, abominate, anathematis, and fear."28

A look at Henry Churchill King's addresses also reflects in part this new mood. He called the remaining pacifists blind and asserted that true pacifism "sees the terror of war and the still greater terror of an ignoble surrender of the fruits of all Christian civilization. He spoke out against the Germans bluntly:

"We are, thus, getting a demonstration, wide as the race, that the final harvest of exclusive national selfishness freely chosen, of limitless arrogance freely cherished, of an anti-Christian philosophy of state without one moral scruple, but freely taken on, is simply a hell on earth."

He began to see in the war a developing sense of cooperation among the allies, the trend toward democracy, the idea of a league of nations, and a new internationalism which were the "grounds of hope" for a new civilization. With American entry, also, King began to preach that the United States had to enter because the issues at stake were "issues which we ourselves had raised". King later concluded that "under the providence of God "the war could not end" until America could come in with unified conscience, with full realization.

28. The Oberlin Review, April 10, 1917, April 17, 1917; The Oberlin Tribune, April 13, 1917; letter from Devere Allen to Katherine Hyde, March 26, 1917 as recorded in K. Hyde's The World War and the Colleges, addenda; The Oberlin Review, April 17, 1917; The Oberlin Review, May 22, 1917.
of the meaning of the crisis, and with all her powers." 29

The Review, which earlier had spoken out against military training now asked whether six hours a week were enough. 30 It introduced two regular columns - "Military Training Skills", to report the activities of the local military training unit and "Intercollegiate", to report the military and war service activities of other colleges and universities. War talk even reduced the space given to athletics in the paper.

With the American entry, issues became black and white. Discussions of whether or not we should enter were now irrelevant. The choice was made. The Allies were right and the Germans were the enemies in war. Either you actively and vociferously supported the war or you were disloyal. Despite calls for tolerance and clear-thinking, war hysteria swept over Oberlin during these last two months of the school year 1916-17 as students and townspeople were overcome by a spontaneous desire to contribute to the war and failed to consider how they could best accomplish this aim.

The college tried to return to normal in the school year, 1917-18. Certainly the upheaval of the previous year subsided. But, at best college life was uneasy and very strained. A tension existed between the concrete happenings of a troubled world and the abstract, disinterested pursuit of learning in an academic community. A Review editorial commented:

"Things academic appear more unreal than ever before. Our desire is to be out in all war activities, doing something which shall get some result we shall see." 31

Though academics apparently did not suffer greatly, the war was the focus of attention at Oberlin. The main responses to the war can be categorized

29. H.C. King, "Grounds of Hope in the Changing World Order", a baccalaureate sermon delivered in Oberlin, June 10, 1917, p.18; H.C. King, "Good Thoughts in Bad Times", a baccalaureate sermon delivered to the GST, May 13, 1917, p.17; letter to Dr. Dan F. Bradley, April 26, 1917; H.C. King, "Some Moral Demonstrations of the World War", a baccalaureate sermon delivered in Oberlin, June 16, 1918, p.11.
30. The Oberlin Review, April 17, 1917.
31. The Oberlin Review, January 19, 1918.
as responses of the emotions, active patriotic service, and the intellect.

The emotional response to all things German was evident in all sections of the campus. The conservatory of music no longer practiced or performed German compositions. The dorm took down large photographs of German landmarks which were displayed in the railroad station. The Oberlin College catalog of 1916-17 referred to the "German pastor and philanthropist, Johann Friedrich Oberlin". But, the catalog of the following year transformed this historic figure and spoke of the "Alsation pastor and philanthropist, John Frederick Oberlin". By far the most dramatic and tragic was the decline in the enrollment in German classes. Enrollment was measured in instruction units. One instruction unit was one student enrolled for one credit. In 1913-14, the year before the war started, German had 3133 instruction units. In 1916-17, the department had 2612 instruction units, in 1917-18, 1373 instruction units; and in 1918-19 the bottom fell out as the German department only had 159 units. In 1918-19 only seven men and fifty women elected to take German. One cause might have been that most of the men were in the Student Army Training Corps. The decline broke this strong department. The head of the department, W.E. Noshi, left for another position, and a large reduction in the teaching staff became necessary.32.

Criticism of Professor Karl Geiser mounted in this year and even continued beyond the end of the war. Rumblings of criticism and Professor Geiser's complaints to King of interference with his academic freedom were heard prior to the American entry. But criticism became loud and open in 1917-18. The critics of Geiser remembered his legalistic defense of the German actions

in sinking the Lusitania and were continually bothered by his logical, intellectual approach to the issues of the war, which to them were not logical questions but moral questions. Geiser, although he expressed support for the President, bought Liberty Bonds, and supported war activities, was out-of-step with the mood of moral righteousness and idealism which pervaded the campus. The FBI investigated him and self-appointed super-patriots among the student body and faculty carefully scrutinized his actions. Geiser, obviously bothered, wrote a letter to King:

"Finally, Mr. President, why should I, a native-born American, whose wife is British (Eng.), Scotch and Irish plus several other nationalities, with an American baby, be anything but American? I am not a fool.... My only object in writing this is to assure you, with some evidence for that assurance, that I am not pro-German, that I resent being so-called, that I am American loyal to the core."

The Geiser question simmered throughout the year. The FBI cleared him, the faculty supported his academic freedom, but the Board of Trustees was not easily convinced. The Board of Trustees minutes of June 17, 1918 reported that: "Almost all of the Trustees expressed grave anxiety concerning the continuance of Professor Geiser in his chair; no action was taken." A letter from Dean C.N. Cole to King who was in Europe dated November 23, 1918 indicated that, "the Geiser matter is likely to make us a good deal of trouble". He reported that the Board of Trustees felt very strongly on the matter and had approved the Prudential Committee's recommendation that Geiser be asked to look for another job. The Board agreed to let the faculty General Council consider the case and to decide the matter with finality at the June, 1919 meeting. King's marginal notes on this letter cited the question of academic freedom on the one hand and yet he commented, "Geiser is not without fault and we've given a long period of grace." Another letter from Cole to King
on February 24, 1919 suggests that King recommended that Geiser be retained on some type of probation. Cole reported that Geiser had "become very defiant in temper and will accept nothing...but permission to come back and resume his work without conditions." He stated that Geiser had threatened to air his case in *The Nation* and *The New Republic*. The issue was finally resolved at the board of trustees meeting on June 16, 1919. The special trustee's committee recommended that "Professor Geiser's services be discontinued at the close of the present fiscal year." The faculty General Council recommended "that further discussion of the matter be dropped and that Professor Geiser resume his work at the beginning of the next school year as originally planned." A member moved that Professor Geiser "use due diligence in finding a position with some other institution". He withdrew his motion and the following was approved unanimously: "That both the trustee committee report upon the Geiser case and the General Council report be received and placed on file." Thus, seven months after the end of the war, the Geiser problem was resolved. Hostility was still evident against him and only the support of the faculty and administration saved his position.33.

Pacifism either died out or was successfully suppressed. No report of pacifist activities or utterances besides *The Rational Patriot* and Devere Allen appeared in any of the literature. *The Rational Patriot* issued two papers in November and December, 1917. Personal threats reduced Allen's support. He commented that "he had a fairly good following at first, then the numbers dwindled down to a lonely dozen and finally six of those 'cracked under the strain.'" A clear expression of rational opposition to anti-war sentiment and *The Rational Patriot* appear in a Review editorial of November

33. Hyde, p.17; letters from Geiser to King, March 17, 1917, October 22, 1917; letters from Cole to King, November 22, 1918, February 24, 1919; minutes of the Board of Trustees, June 16, 1919, p.5.
"The rational patriot is not now one who strives too minutely to discover the causes of the present war. He is not one who in any way would hinder the accomplishment of the allies' objective - the securing for the world the kind of government and the sort of international relations to which Germany does not care to subscribe."

Because The Rational Patriot did not express the views of a rational patriot, The Review concluded that "the time for the appearance of such a paper as The Rational Patriot has passed." This sore spot eliminated itself in May, 1917 by merging with an eastern paper.34

An interesting letter from King to Professor Arthur S. Hoyt on March 19, 1918 concerning applicants for the position of the retiring Professor Lyman reflects in part King's views on pacifism:

"Professor Lyman has taken so strong a pacifist position as some of the time rather to embarrass us in our relation to a hearty support of the war, and, other things being equal, we should rather prefer that his successor - while we hope a pacifist in the true sense, - would be able heartily to support the Government in the present war."

So, during the war an intolerant, anti-pacifistic spirit invaded Oberlin. But apparently, they had few pacifists to criticize and the town threw its energies into activities in support of the war.

The most obvious effect of the war was the reduction in student enrollment. The women's enrollment in 1917-18 rose slightly but the men's enrollment fell from 433 in 1916-17 to 300 in 1917-18, a thirty percent decline.

Most of those who left went into war work. A group of Oberlin men had volunteered together to form the Oberlin Ambulance Unit which was much publicized in Oberlin and later honored itself and the college by receiving the Italian War Cross.

With the decline in male enrollment, most of the war activities on campus
were organized by the women. The War Relief Committee of the Women's League organized six committees: financial, French soldier, French orphan, Red Cross, surgical dressings, and miscellaneous. Through the efforts of these committees students pledged $1300 to support fifteen French soldiers and seventeen French orphans, students assisted in making surgical dressings, knitting needles clicked all over campus, even in men's houses, and soldiers received frequent letters and Christmas and birthday cards. They raised money by sponsoring dances, bake sales, book exchanges, dinners, and plays. The college again offered frequent accredited Red Cross courses on the elementary and intermediate level which gained heavy enrollment. Acting on a request of the war department the college set up a nursing course to train women in "the after cure of wounded soldiers" in the fall of 1917. Again, in response to a request by the National Food Administration the college established three courses, following the established course outline of the NFA. Directed by Mrs. Katherine R. McNamara, hired by the college for this purpose, the program consisted of a one hour course in "Food and the War", a three hour course in "Fundamentals of Food and Nutrition in Relation to the War", and a one hour laboratory course in "Use and Conservation of Foods". The women responded so enthusiastically that the course was offered in a slightly different form the following year. The women, also, participated in speaking in neighboring communities. The YWCA sent women to speak in churches on such topics as "Mother's Day and Patriotism", and "Religion and Patriotism". In February, 1918 the Women's War Committee of Lorain County enlisted the services of Oberlin women to investigate rumors of local pro-German propaganda and to speak on patriotic subjects in the area.35.

35. K. Hyde, p.32; Annual Reports 1917-18, pp.92-93, 153-59; The Oberlin Review, September 23, 1917, October 30, 1917; K. Hyde, p.25
The town and college responded enthusiastically to the various fund-raising drives. The Liberty Bond campaigns were oversubscribed as college houses raised funds for bonds by taking leaves and doing odd jobs, giving up refreshments at parties, by contributing to the house sacrifice boxes, etc. Oberlin contributed over $2500 to the Armenian and Syrian Relief drives. In the college a lively inter-dorm competition over the purchase of Thrift Stamps and War Savings Stamps developed.

Lectures and mass meetings which buoyed up the patriotic spirit, abounded. The lectures in this year were more blunt in their denunciation of Germany and their glorification of the Allied cause. Sergeant Arthur Gay Emery, dressed in his British uniform, showed slides and gave a talk on trench warfare. Wesley Frost, with vivid pictures, talked on the atrocities of German U-Boat warfare. Other lecture titles included "The Menace of Germany" and "The Assassination of a Race". Audiences packed Finney Chapel to hear these lectures, to view lantern slides, and to participate in the numerous patriotic sings.36.

Conservation and sacrifice were part of the war effort, too. Meatless and wheatless meals, as well as the use of less sugar and butter, and general avoidance of waste were agreed upon by the dining halls. Many dining halls even voted additional measures of food conservation. Material scarcity also necessitated conservation of coal, electricity, and flour. The electricity and heat were turned off in many college buildings during parts of the winter of 1917-18.

The college administration, acting in accordance with its resolution volunteering the entire college to the service of the country, never refused an official request if it could help it. We have already seen that

it agreed to establish Red Cross and food conservation courses which would not be strictly under the control of the college. The greatest single step in the voluntary loss of college autonomy was the agreement of the college to house a unit of the Student Army Training Corps at Oberlin. The college heartily approved the request in May, 1918 and lived to regret this step.

Although the United States was in the war, students left campus for the war and died in war duty, and students were raising money for war, students, generally, could not narrate the events of the war nor give an intellectually convincing discussion of the war. The Review criticized students' lack of knowledge as did Professor David R. Moore of the history department in a letter to President King.

"Though we have been nearly a year at war the average student's apathy, lack of information, or misinformation about it is really pathetic. He does not read the books or magazines, much less the daily papers;...I am not exaggerating when I say that half my students could not even tell me where Alsace was, let alone discuss the right or wrong of the matter."

As a partial remedy Moore offered to teach a weekly one hour course on "timely topics of the background of the war". King accepted and on March 8, 1918 the course began with an enrollment of 165 and with 175, as the average number of visitors at each meeting.²⁷

The College Faculty Committee on Patriotism published essays and pamphlets and organized speech contests and courses on the war. In a pamphlet of the Oberlin College War Papers, "Patriotic Citizenship and World Democracy" the group explained its purpose as follows:

"In the belief that both our national existence and our Christian ideals are engaged in a life and death struggle, it seemed to the College Committee on Patriotic Education to be highly fitting that an effort should be made to arouse and direct in our student body an intelligent understanding of the issues that are at stake in this world conflict, and to indicate what manner

²⁷. The Oberlin Review, March 15, 1918; letter from D.R. Moore to H.C. King on February 12, 1918.
of sacrifice and service the college community should perform. This seemed the more desirable in view of the fact that it gave us the opportunity of taking part in the nation-wide movement for 'mobilizing North American students for Christian World Democracy', that was inaugurated in January at Northfield, Massachusetts, by delegates from the churches, the colleges, and the student Christian associations."

In substance its views were very similar to those of King and its hope was to prepare leadership for the great reconstruction. 33.

As part of its program, W.E. Mosher organized a course on the fundamental principles of the war. Eight hundred students enrolled and the five week course began on Sunday, March 10. As a follow-up the YMCA sponsored four weekly discussions involving a "more intensive treatment of the Christian principles involved in the war." A total of 290 students enrolled in this course. Interest seemed to be high and the need, great for such courses.

But war activities did not capture the students' entire attention. This was the year in which discussion of the Sunday rules and the rules against smoking and dancing were current. Athletics were still very important. In the fall the faculty cancelled classes on Saturday, October 27 so that students could go to Cleveland to see the game against Western Reserve. At the Railroad station on October 5, 600 saw the football team off to Ithaca where they were to play Cornell. But the war hit athletics, too. Oberlin maintained intercollegiate athletics but had to cancel many games because other colleges did not or were having difficulties. War even became part of the field events during the track season. One conference event in the spring of 1919 was the grenade toss. The contestant attempted to throw the grenade in regulation manner thirty yards over a five and one-half foot fence into a ten foot circle. The person scoring the most hits inside

33. Oberlin College War Papers, "Patriotic Citizenship and World Democracy" (Oberlin, February, 1910), p.1
the circle in ten throws earned five points for his team.

The Review showed well the tension of conflicting forces in Oberlin. An editorial of May 7, 1918 said:

"The year past, has, to say the least, not been normal. It has not been normal mainly in the sense that our attention has been fixed more than ever before on affairs outside the immediate college life. Colleges have, in a way, been forced to justify themselves in the past year, and to give sufficient reason for their apparent non-productivity."

This tension between the call of the war and the call of academia did not resolve itself. The Secretary of War, President King, and Dean Bosworth urged students to stay in school. The Review echoed this request, urging rational thought, "a disinterested outlook and an unbiased opinion", and "perspective". It editorialized on "The Value of a College Education" which would prepare leaders for the reconstruction period. Another editorial stated, "Colleges are, from one point of view, the mainstay of our democracy." The fact that The Review continually urged students to stay in school and study indicates that students tended not to stay in school and not to study. The Review comment, "There is even now a peculiar unreality about the idea of attending college," seems more in line with campus opinion than The Review exhortations mentioned earlier. Those students who remained on campus felt there had to prove they were not inactive and that they were doing their part in the war effort. They were not going to maintain a "disinterested outlook". They were going to get involved. They talked about the war everywhere, brooded about it, and acted. They acted in many ways and contributed much valuable service. But many activities seemed to be conscience salves and time chalked up on the war service chart. The year certainly was
The year 1918-19 began with the introduction of the Student Army Training Corps and Oberlin became a near-military school. This corresponded with the absence of President King for war service in Europe. The Student Army Training Corps was a program set up by the government to train college students to be officers in the military. Many colleges had units of the SATC on campus. The SATC differed from the present day ROTC program in that the members were in the regular army and subject to military discipline and orders. The SATC brought the war to Oberlin and students did all they could to welcome the men. On the induction service, The Review said "It was a reconsecration of all of us to the best for which Oberlin, the nation, our Christianity stands." The Alumni Magazine said the SATC brought to Oberlin "a new spirit - a spirit of sacrifice, of increased toil for principle's sake, of the subordination of selfish aims for the welfare of the whole." The college women were spurred to new activity and posed the question, "Are we worth fighting for?" 39.

Over half of the men in the SATC were Oberlin students. But to encourage other students to join, the academic standards of admission were lowered. Thus, many men of inferior intellectual ability, interested only in getting a commission, came to Oberlin. The men lived and ate in the Men's Building (now Wilder Hall). Though their academic work was administered and supervised by the college, the military controlled the rest of the men's lives. The men, as members of the regular army, wore

39. The Oberlin Review, October 2, 1918; The Oberlin Alumni Magazine, October, 1918, p.1
military uniforms. They drilled eleven hours per week, took military courses including military tactics and war aims, and some could elect nine hours of college courses from a prescribed list.40

Though, theoretically plausible, the experiment failed miserably. Early, friction arose concerning discipline. Captain Francis Root, commandant of the unit, refused to allow the college disciplinary control and thus, the members of the unit smoked and failed to attend chapel with impunity. On the academic side the officers encouraged "a spirit of indifference if not actual contempt" and often pulled men out of class for drills or marguvers. This attitude combined with the lower aptitude of the SATC members slowed down the academic process. When the war ended, the incentive of a military commission disappeared, and the SATC virtually lost all drive. By this time all elements of the campus, the administration, faculty, students, and SATC members, had become disenchanted with the unit and urged demobilization as soon as possible. With the orders confirmed to demobilize Dean Cole was relieved. In a letter to King in Europe he said:

"The S.A.T.C. has only one week more to go. After that w'll hope to have a very much more satisfactory time with the affairs back in our own control again."

On December 21, 1918 the unit was disbanded and the college attempted to salvage what was left of the year. Still, Oberlin had tried to serve and the spirit may be shown by a quote from the Annual Reports of 1918-19:

"Although the ominous initials sometimes seemed to mean 'Sad Attempt to Cooperate' everyone of us did his utmost to make

the organization accomplish the end for which it was devised by the War Department. 41

The school year, 1918-19 began as a war year and the war activities changed little. With most of the men gone or in the SATC, the women ran the school. Athletics continued as the SATC added great depth to the teams. On November 7, 1918 the fire whistle, signalling the end of the war, went off shortly after noon. A crowd of 2000 quickly gathered for the parade and news did not come until 5 P.M. that the United Press report was false.

But four days later the real thing occurred. The fire whistle went off at 4:30 A.M. after the mayor confirmed the report. A crowd of over 2000 accumulated in Tappan Square and led by a fire truck full of Keep girls, they marched to Finney Chapel and sang "America". At ten o'clock that same morning 2500 people packed Finney Chapel and heard speeches by Mayor Phillips, Reverend Williams, Professor Hutchins, and Dean Bosworth. After the meeting the SATC formally marched off and burned the Kaiser in effigy. The administration called off classes that day and it was a festive day sparked by fireworks and decorated autos.

The war ended. The SATC left. Those who had withdrawn from school slowly began to filter back and the school gradually returned to normal. The outside world faded again into the background as the campus embroiled itself in local social problems. But that is another story.

The war was an interesting episode in Oberlin history. The college moved from an institution devoted to the disinterested pursuit of truth to an integral part of the war machine. The tension between Christian

pacifism and the philosophy of war resolved itself in the mind of Henry Churchill King and this resolution became the ideal. But ideals and realities rarely coexisted during the war in Oberlin. Though tempered by the religious idealism of King and many professors and the religious backgrounds of the students, the response of the college was usually far from that asked by King. Instead of being motivated by carefully considered Christian principles, the students reacted to the war in a zealous, irrationally emotional manner. Toleration nearly disappeared as the call of dogmatic patriotism swept the college off its feet. Single-minded support of the war was the only path for a loyal American to take. Instead of acting on a firm knowledge of the meaning of the war the students acted on partial knowledge, well-worn cliches, and enthusiasm. But what they lacked in knowledge they made up for in spirit. All efforts turned toward the war and for a while it appeared as if academics would fade into oblivion. Yes, like the rest of the country, the college became totally committed to the war. The transformation was painful for many but when achieved, nearly absolute. Oberlin, set apart from society in the pre-war days, called upon to be different during the war, came dangerously near, in many ways, to losing its individuality and falling into the main stream of war hysteria.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

Allen, H. Devere, *A War-Time Credo*, (Oberlin, Oberlin College, 1917)


Hyde, Katherine, *The World War and the Colleges*, (Oberlin, Oberlin College, 1917)


King, Henry Churchill, *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*, (Oberlin, Press of the News Printing Co., 1917)


Rees, Albert, *Oberlin, the War Years*, (Oberlin, Oberlin Chapter of the American Student Union, 1946)

COLLEGES DOCUMENTS

Annual Reports of the President and the Treasure of Oberlin College, 1915-16 through 1918-19

Class Letters, 1914-18

Minutes, Board of Trustees, 1918 and 1919

Minutes, Women's Senate, 1915-19
Patriotic Citizenship and World Democracy, Oberlin College War Papers, (Oberlin, Oberlin College, 1913)

YWCA Annual Reports, 1914-19

LETTERS

"King Papers"

NEWSPAPERS

The Oberlin Review

The Oberlin News

The Oberlin Tribune