

Title slide: The period of U.S. participation in World War I was a formative one for young Tilford Dudley: he had to grapple with his father's absence due to military service and his mother's stress at raising a family of four by herself; with the scrimping and saving of the homefront at wartime and the tales of death and destruction from abroad as well as the loss of local neighbors and acquaintances.

Slide 2: In 1917 Tilford had just turned ten. The normal family routine of dinner every evening with his parents and younger sisters at their house on Tenth and Harrison, and occasional trips accompanying his father Gerry on a doctor's call was about to be disrupted – disrupted by a far-off war that few initially thought would last more than a month. From letters, memories, and newspapers we've been able to glean some tidbits about what was going on in the Dudley family during this period – and we hope that other homefront stories from Charleston will fill out the picture.

Slide 3: When the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a Servian student on June 28th, 1914, the story warranted a front page spot in the Charleston Daily Courier, but little local attention was paid to the rising tensions in Europe until a month later. When war broke out amongst the major European powers, the world, including Charleston, took notice; the Daily Courier splashed the news in bold headlines across the front – it even advertised itself as publishing the “very latest European war news hot from the wires.”

Slide 4: Soon local angles to the conflict were discovered as relatives and friends worried about local travelers stuck abroad in the war zone, and the prices of commodities like sugar, flour, lemons and beans began to rise.

Slide 5: Of course, through the early years of the war, the U.S. remained neutral, despite historic ties to England and France. Coles County was home to many German immigrants, including the Furste family of Humboldt. In early 1915 Henry Furste received a letter from his brother,

August, who was serving in the German army, which was published in the Mattoon Daily Journal Gazette. The letter describes the status of the war – Germany was in the midst of a string of successes, and had run through Belgium and parts of France – and asserts that “England is wholly to blame” for the conflict. Of course, at this point in time such a letter was looked on with interest, rather than the suspicion that would color German connections two years later.

Slide 6: By 1916, despite threats to American neutrality on the part of German U-Boats and English pressure, as well as reports of wartime atrocities, most Charlestonians were content to stay out of it, outside of donating money for the relief of Belgian war orphans. President Woodrow Wilson won reelection in 1916 based largely on the slogan “He kept us out of war.” Peace talks dominated the headlines in January 1917 – the Normal School offered a peace prize contest for the best essay on “What education can do toward the maintenance of a permanent peace.” However, the wording of a January 27th Daily Courier headline proved ominous, as within less than a week the state of affairs went from “War near its close” to something more like “War near; it’s close.”

Slide 7: By March the focus of the Normal School students had changed from peace to preparedness and military training. Once war was declared in April 1917, both Charleston and the Normal School mobilized rapidly.

Slide 8: Local women formed a Red Cross Auxiliary on April 3rd, with headquarters on the square. In addition to paying the one dollar annual dues, many members assisted in making hospital supplies as well as received training from local doctors in First Aid. Citizens of Charleston were exhorted to join as the community competed against its neighbor, Mattoon, in numbers and fundraising.

Slide 9: As Illinois was the greatest food-producing state in the union, one of its chief contributions toward winning the war would involve increasing the production of its crops; and

on April 14th the Governor issued a proclamation mobilizing the resources of the state to that end. The Charleston Merchants' Association anticipated him in this, however – on April 13th, the Daily Courier printed “An Appeal” from the Association to the citizens of Charleston, urging them to ensure *quote* “the utmost elimination of waste and the utmost stimulation of production to carry us through with our full fighting stamina.” *endquote* The Merchants proposed that every foot of vacant space in town be used to plant food, allotting money to buy seeds for those who could not afford it, and enlisting the aid of the Boy Scouts – possibly including Tilford – in checking up on everyone's yard. The Merchants put their money where their mouth was, as well, donating their newspaper advertising space all week to messages supporting the cause.

Slide 10: Students at the Normal School recognized the role their generation would play in the war. Other than enlisting and joining the Red Cross, editorials urged students to have some “school sings” of patriotic songs on campus, to spend less money on movies and clothes, and to go home to help on the farm. One student writer specifically instructed girls to “Find out how to hitch that four-horse team” and to “learn the workings of a gang plow and binder.” Students who remained were exhorted to recognize the important role for teachers and college graduates in shaping the future of the world and addressing its problems. For those who left school, administrators created a system whereby students who enlisted in the service of “Uncle Sam” or in the service of “King Corn” received credit for the spring term. Both forms of service took a toll on the Normal School athletic teams, which were depleted or disbanded all together.

Slide 11: Young men, though, weren't the only ones who felt called to service. Tilford's father, Dr. Gerry Dudley, felt an appeal to his patriotism as well, both from the call for doctors in the American Medical Association advertisements and through a pointed question from his son. Tilford remembers sitting around the table at dinner one day that April, talking about what various people were doing for the war, and then asking his father, “Well, and what are *you* going

to do?” Despite his age – Dr. Dudley was 42 – he decided to volunteer. Enlisting doctors in Illinois were required to take an examination before a medical board in Chicago. Dr. Dudley performed so well on his – “they couldn’t catch him on a single question,” reported a relative – that he was commissioned a captain, rather than the usual doctor’s rank of first lieutenant.

Slide 12: The first registration for the Selective Service took place in June, with 2,765 prospects between the ages of 21 and 30 recorded in Coles County. Numbers were randomly called up in July, coming to the Daily Courier over the wire, with Charleston residents thronging around the newspaper office to see the board.

Slide 13: Not all the young men of Charleston were eager, or even resigned, to go to war. One Charleston man unsuccessfully schemed to avoid the draft in July by claiming that his child, who lived with another guardian, was dependent on him. In September, a Mattoon man of German descent killed himself after being driven insane by continual brooding about the possibility that his son might be called up to fight.

Slide 14: The first Charleston men sent off to training camp, though, were not the draftees but the initial volunteers. Late August and early September saw an almost continuous string of events in town to honor the departing soldier boys. The first round of twelve left Charleston for Camp Taylor, in Kentucky, on September 5th, to a huge farewell demonstration attended by most of the town, possibly including the Dudleys. After being served dinner at the Eat restaurant, the young men marched to the south side of the court house, where an ovation was given, prayers were said, and songs were sung. Citizens then followed the boys to the Big Four station, where an even larger crowd had gathered, for the final send-off.

Slide 15: Tributes of similar character, although not all as elaborate as the first, were held throughout the fall of 1917 as more soldiers departed for camp, such as this group seen here on October 2nd. Before they boarded the train, each soldier was given a comfort bag, presented by

the Red Cross and filled by different women of the city, with items that would prove useful at camp and overseas.

Slide 16: Both newspapers published letters from soldiers, first at camp and later from the front. One faithful correspondent to the Normal School News was Martin Schahrer, president of the E.I.S.N. class of 1917 and top athlete, who was with the first enlistees who departed for Camp Taylor. One letter from Schahrer gave the details of some interstate rivalry at the camp YMCA, when he wrote about his boxing victory over an Indiana boy who outweighed him by 40 pounds, much to the delight of the Illinois soldiers. Martin Schahrer also wrote of his experiences teaching some of his fellow soldiers to read and write, and of setting them assignments to write home.

Slide 17: It was not only the men of Charleston who served overseas. Mary Booth, librarian at the Normal School, volunteered for Red Cross work at the front, and was sent to France as a canteen worker in November.

Slide 18: Dr. Dudley received his orders and departed for camp at Fort Riley, Kansas, in August, the first doctor in Charleston to be called to service. Always a man to keep in good physical condition, he apparently enjoyed the training they underwent. According to his daughters, he was able “to outrun and outride men half his age.”

Slide 19: He wrote in a letter to a friend that, *quote* “It is certainly a peculiar experience to be suddenly dragged away from home and business and be thrust into an entirely different life. It is much as if one were dead and could look back dimly to one’s former environment and yet not be able to communicate with it.” *endquote* When a short film at the Rex Theater about soldiers training included some shots of Fort Riley and, remarkably, of Captain Dudley, the Dudley family got a surprise viewing of this camp life of their husband and father.

Captain Dudley gave his wife Esther power of attorney over all his business in his absence, advising her, as he wrote to a friend, *quote* “to handle my affairs in the way that will mean least worry and annoyance to her for no matter how hard a lot a soldier may have, it is the wife and mother that stays at home and raises the family, and waits and hopes, who bears the real burden of the war.” *endquote*

Slide 20: Captain Dudley departed from camp to make the journey across the Atlantic in late December, 1917. As his train was to come through Charleston, the town planned an ovation for him. False rumors of the train’s arrival time spread throughout the day, and it ended up being delayed until 2 a.m., when everyone was in bed, except his wife and children, who boarded the train and rode with him as far as Indianapolis to say good-bye.

Captain Dudley did not, apparently, have a particularly good experience aboard the ship, becoming so seasick on the stormy voyage that a fellow officer wrote, ‘The poor fellow toddles into the dining room, gets a smell of the food, and toddles out again, making a beeline for the rail.’

Slide 21: Upon arriving in Europe, the Fort Riley unit reported to France, where Captain Dudley was second in command of America’s first evacuation hospital, treating the wounded between the front line stations and the base hospitals, but close enough to receive artillery fire. Though he downplayed the danger in letters to his family, he did report lying in a fox hole one night, watching artillery shells burst. Not able to sleep, he moved to another spot and dozed off. In the morning he saw that a shell landed during the night in his first hole.

Captain Dudley’s letters about dugouts and the trenches made a big impression on his son, Tilford, who constructed a dugout of his own back in Charleston, in front of his grandfather’s barn, where the neighborhood boys would often meet and build a fire.

Slide 22: The Dudley family kept up a prolific correspondence, with letters between Captain Dudley and his “dear sweetheart and kiddoes,” as he referred to them, numbering in the 200s. Besides the letters, Esther Dudley sent her husband knitted socks, blank stationary, and clippings from home newspapers. In summer 1918, Captain Dudley had a short leave from service, and took a trip with some fellow officers away from the front in France. He wrote to Esther of how well fed he had been, mentioning that *quote* “I thought of you skimping and starving back home while we were rolling in luxury and plenty.” *Endquote* Of course, many of the foods unavailable in France – sugar, bread, fats – were also restricted in the United States, which took its task as breadbasket of the Allies very seriously. Under the direction of the newly created U.S. Food Administration, Meatless, Wheatless, and Porkless days of the week were instituted. Shopkeepers had to be licensed to sell sugar, and only two pounds per capita were doled out each month. Substances such as Oleo margarine were substituted for butter. Fuel as well as food was in short supply: Heatless Mondays were established, with many shops and businesses closed. Daylight Savings Time was also first employed in this period as a coal-saving measure.

Slide 23: In addition to this sort of skimping and saving, the citizens of Charleston were also bombarded with requests for the donation or lending of money to further the war cause. The most prominent of these fundraising campaigns – and most legitimate, at least according to Captain Dudley – were the U.S. Government Liberty Bonds, with four drives undertaken in 1917 and 1918. Captain Dudley wrote to Esther in 1918 that *quote* “I would suggest that you make no further contributions to any thing unless it is to buy Liberty Bonds. I think we have contributed enough. It is all right for the stay at homes. ... It is hard to estimate what our losses have been, but in money, it would be a conservative estimate to say three or four thousand per year. I don't want to support a French war orphan. I've got about four of my own to do something for during my remaining years. The French government is amply able to take care of its own orphans.”

endquote The Dudleys, ever thrifty and with an eye toward their children’s college educations, wrote back and forth quite often about such financial concerns.

Charlestonians kept track of the status of their Liberty Bond drive on a large scoreboard, seen here. There were apparently intracity as well as intercity rivalries in regard to the raising of funds – The Daily Courier reported in April 1918 that two local women began soliciting pledges in advance of the stipulated start of the drive, hitting up some lucrative donors early. Their excuse was that, because of spring housecleaning, they would not have time to go out later in the month. The Daily Courier was duly skeptical, commenting that *quote* “if the race gets real close, house cleaning will be postponed for awhile in two homes in the city. This prediction is based upon the known characteristics of the members of the team.” *endquote*

In addition to simple appeals to patriotism, entertainment gimmicks to stimulate interest were also employed in support of the Liberty Bonds. Mr. Harold Marker, a neighbor of the Dudley family on 10th Street, remembers that during the war bond drive in spring 1918 a tank was brought to Charleston to drum up public enthusiasm. Mr. Marker recalls rushing out of school that Saturday down to where 6th Street intersected the Town Branch, where the tank was on display running over some of the rubble from the old opera house. He said that “compared to a tank now, it wasn’t even a Model T, but it was big stuff” to the young boys, who’d never seen one before. Apparently, though, the driver of the tank got a little cocky, and after successfully navigating it through the Town Branch, which was running high during springtime, he decided to have another go. Well, this one wasn’t so successful – the tank got stuck in the Town Branch, and proceeded to be stuck for two weeks before they brought in a steam engine to get it out. So, believe it or not, the Town Branch has foiled an actual war tank.

Slide 24: The citizens of Charleston encountered another new technology at this time as well. On July 13th, 1918, Esther Elizabeth wrote to her father, *quote* “I have seen something to-day you

are seeing all the time. The areoplane came from Rantoul. ... I liked it very much. ... When we first saw it Dorothy Anne says ‘What a little areoplane!’ When she saw it on the ground she said ‘What a large areoplane!’” *endquote* Mr. Harold Marker, Esther Elizabeth’s young neighbor, also remembers the arrival of the airplane. He and some older neighborhood boys saw it coming, hopped in a Model T and chased after it in a cloud of dust – they were among the first to arrive at the landing site, at John White’s pasture around where Paigliai’s is today. Mr. Marker also went to see the plane take off a few days later, and recalls that his cousin Bob, a farm boy who had never read much about airplanes, accompanied them. Well, as the people of Charleston watched it take off, Bob apparently exclaimed in disappointment, “I didn’t get to see it flap its wings!” Anything that flew flapped its wings, of course.

Slide 25: Although events such as these did something to mitigate the days of shortages and stress and worry, circumstances overseas in the summer of 1918 brought anxiety and fear to the people of Charleston. The major German offensive in July was finally stopped, and in August the Allied armies began an offensive of their own. This meant more action, of higher intensity, for American soldiers, including those from Coles County. Captain Dudley was among them when he was switched from the Evacuation Hospital to a post closer to the front, with the 165th Infantry of the Rainbow Division in September. Most issues of the Daily Courier included casualty lists of downstate Illinois soldiers.

Slide 26: When peace was finally declared on November 11th, 1918, jubilation was somewhat tempered by the toll taken by the influenza epidemic, as you’ll hear later this afternoon. Both Mattoon and Charleston held Armistice Day parades. Across the Atlantic, Captain Dudley reported that when the Armistice was announced, his unit was marching behind the lines to a new location, and the men, apparently, were too tired to cheer. They just stopped, sat down at the side of the road, and rested.

Slide 27: But for Captain Dudley and the 165th, the armistice did not spell the end of their service. Many American soldiers were sent to Germany as part of the Army of Occupation. One such member of the occupying forces, George Franklin of Mattoon, wrote to a friend of how weary he was of the soldierly lifestyle, asserting that when he arrived home he would, among other things, “vote for a law prohibiting the manufacture of bugles.”

Slide 28: With the onset of peace, local communities sought to honor those who served and welcome them home. An arch was built in January 1919 across 6th Street on the northeast corner of the square in Charleston with the banner, “Soldiers, Sailors welcome.” Coles County residents also sought to memorialize those who died. One of the fallen, who died in action very close to the end of the war, was Martin Schahrer, the former E.I.S.N. class president whose accounts of training camp we heard earlier. The Normal School service flag included eight gold stars and 249 blues ones. Mattoon High School lost one alumnus, Sergeant Lawrence Riddle, after whom they named their school magazine, and, later, an elementary school. The 1929 Illinois Honor Roll database includes 34 World War I soldiers who are buried in Coles County.

Slide 29: Dr. Dudley finally sailed back to the United States in April. Prior to his arrival, he had written Esther, who was dealing with sick children as well as illness herself, *quote* “Never mind about getting the house in order for my homecoming.... I am not half as particular as your mother may think.” *endquote* He finally arrived in Charleston on May 14th. After settling in at home for a few days, Dr. Dudley spoke to an assembly at Jefferson School in Charleston. He talked of military life during the war in general, but told no personal experiences, “studiously avoiding the pronoun ‘I.’” This reticence continued throughout his life; according to Tilford, his father said that *quote* “When you see men brought in with arms and legs shot off, with their backs and stomachs so full of holes, they’re like sieves, you don’t want to talk about it.”

endquote Dr. Dudley was, however, very proud of his service. Near the end of his life, he served as an examining physician for World War II draftees.

Slide 30: Tilford, also, was proud of his father's service, submitting a biographical sketch to the 1976 bicentennial Coles County History which related it in detail. The legacy of the war in formulating underpinnings of Tilford's belief system, though, was somewhat more ambivalent. He earned several marksmanship certificates from the Winchester Junior Rifle Corps in 1922, and attended a citizens' military training camp in 1924. But his high school years also saw a formation of the anti-war beliefs he would hold for the rest of his life, influenced by his involvement in church activities and in the YMCA. Tilford gained a reputation at the school as a "radical pacifist," and was given a forum for his views on the editorial page of the Teachers College News in 1925. He wrote of militarism as both unchristian and impractical, saying that *quote* "The World War was the result of attempting to procure peace by military preparedness." *endquote* He did not believe, though, that "extreme pacifism" was the best way to abolish war, but rather the maintenance of small armies and cooperation with worldwide bodies like the League of Nations.

Slide 31: You'll learn more about the development of Tilford's beliefs through his career in the program next Sunday. For now, though, we'll take a short break and then hear Alisha talk about the influenza epidemic. First, though, are there any questions? If I can't answer them, maybe someone else in the audience can.