

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Summer 2008

Volume 43, Number 2

On Courage and Cowards
The Controversy Surrounding
Macalester College's Neutrality
and Peace Association, 1917

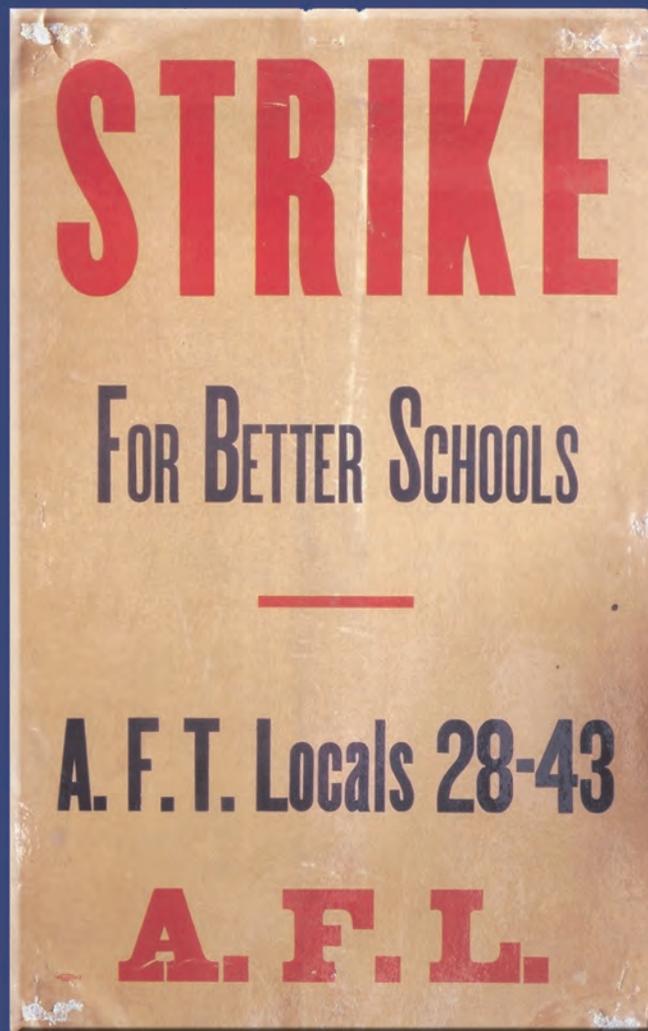
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Strike for Better Schools

The St. Paul Public Schools Teachers' Strike of 1946

Cheryl Carlson

—Page 3



This strike notice was one of many that St. Paul's public school teachers carried in the 1946 teachers' strike, the first strike by teachers in the United States. It is reproduced here by permission of Local 28, American Federation of Teachers.

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Ramsey County History is published quarterly
by the Ramsey County Historical Society,
323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St.
Paul, Minn. 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in
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Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

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The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations
to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program
of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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*Publication of Ramsey County History is supported in part by a gift from
Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr.
and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon*

A Message from the Editorial Board

Sometimes, current events remind us of our own past experiences. But history can provide perspective on the present as well. In these times, confronted with tough school levy and budget issues, we can read Cheryl Carlson's article on the St. Paul teachers' strike of 1946 and see when times were really bad: St. Paul elementary classrooms had up to fifty students and some had no soap or towels in the bathrooms. An outdated and corrupt city-based funding system, an uninterested business community, and families who sent one-third of St. Paul's children to nonpublic schools made a "perfect storm" for inadequate funding. But with the strike, teachers, administrators, and students worked together to apply pressure, leading ultimately to St. Paul's adoption of the current independent school district model. In the same vein, Emily Skidmore's article on the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association points up a passionate disagreement on the merits of the United States' entry into World War I in 1917, much as the current debate goes on over U.S. involvement in the Middle East. But sentiment quickly turned to strong support once Congress voted in favor of the country joining the conflict in Europe.

Patricia Hampl's *The Florist's Daughter*, along with a number of other recent titles reviewed in this issue, offer a bouquet of books for summer (or fall!) reading: histories of a pioneering Native American interpreter and legislator, the St. Paul Public Library, the German-founded brewing industry, and the streetcar era in the Twin Cities. Diverse, entertaining, and great reads.

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board

On Courage and Cowards

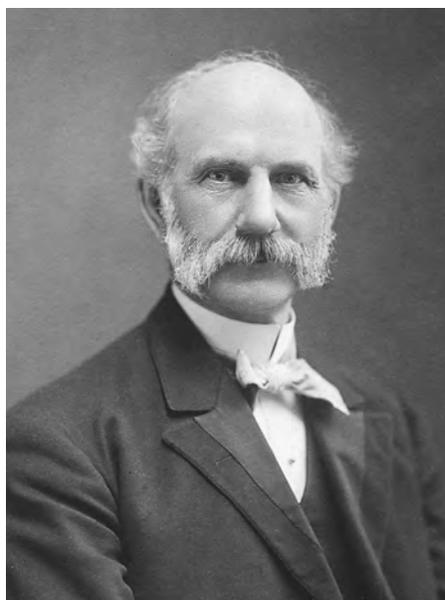
The Controversy Surrounding Macalester College's Neutrality and Peace Association, 1917

Emily Skidmore

St. Paul's Macalester College, for all its many excellent qualities, rarely makes national headlines, but when eighty-seven of its students sent a petition to President Woodrow Wilson and the U.S. Congress in support of neutrality rather than active participation in World War I in March 1917, the school found itself enmeshed in a national controversy. Upon receipt of the petition, Congressman Clarence B. Miller from Duluth was enraged, and expressed his displeasure in a letter which was published in all the major Twin Cities newspapers, and was even syndicated in the *New York Herald* under the headline "Charges Minnesota School with Betraying America."¹

Needless to say, this is not the type of publicity that the college desired, and thus within twenty-four hours of the publication of these words, Macalester students, alumni, and faculty had each organized and submitted their own set of resolutions to President Wilson and the Congress, this time in support of the president and his position on "armed" neutrality. The controversy attracted significant attention in the Twin Cities press, and was subject to great debate within the pages of Macalester's student newspaper, *The Mac Weekly*. While the majority of those who spoke publicly in this controversy did so to assert their full support of President Wilson, those who remained constant in their support of neutrality did so through the use of the similar rhetoric, which included notions of courage, cowardice, and steadfastness that were invoked as positive qualities which male citizens should strive for in order to best defend a vulnerable (and female) America. Because each side in this controversy relied on language that was often cast in masculine or feminine terms, this brief episode in the life of Macalester College illustrates both the power of gender as a cultural motivator and explains why the actions taken by the college's Neutrality and Peace Association attracted such widespread interest.

The political landscape which brought



Professor James Wallace. All photos in this article are courtesy of the Macalester College Archives, DeWitt Wallace Library.

the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association to national attention was fraught with tension in early 1917, as the U.S. was on the brink of entry into World War I. The German government had just proclaimed a new policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, a policy which promised that any U.S. ships entering a maritime zone around Great Britain, along the coast of France, and within a part of

the Mediterranean would be sunk without warning and without respect to life or property. Imperial Germany's new stance regarding ships flying the flags of neutral nations in this zone had every appearance of escalating casualties. President Wilson's initial response to the new policy was to sever diplomatic relations with Germany, but by the end of February, he moved away from neutrality and on February 26, 1917, appeared before Congress to request the authority to arm merchant ships to protect them from more attacks by German submarines. A filibuster, however, prevented the passage of his proposed "Armed Neutrality" bill, causing much controversy within the Twin Cities press. The *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* referred to the actions taken by the twelve filibusters in the Senate as "the most reprehensible in the history of any civilized nation," particularly because they ignored the will of the majority in that legislative body and seemed to endanger the lives of their fellow Americans.²

Professor Wallace Resigns

These words apparently struck a chord within the Macalester community—mobilizing both those who supported and criticized the filibustering senators. Professor James Wallace, for example, articulated a similar position to the one voiced by the *Tribune*. Surprisingly, however, just weeks before, Professor Wallace had been the vice president of the Minnesota branch of the American Peace Society, a national society whose goals were to foster peace both at home and abroad. On March 6, 1917—the day after the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* castigated the filibustering senators—Wallace made a very public resignation from the Peace Society. He stepped down from his role through a letter to the editor

published in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, which was reprinted two days later in the *St. Paul Dispatch*. Wallace explained to the Twin Cities readership that he no longer believed that supporting peace was the proper stance of civilians. He then went a step further and stated that advocating peace in the given political climate was “a very unpatriotic and dangerous policy,” adding,

It is impossible to exaggerate the moral crisis now confronting the world. The American that cannot see this, in view of the solemn array of stunning facts that now stares us in the face, ought to be disenfranchised on the ground of unconscionable stupidity. . . . The American who preaches peace and submission in these circumstances invites his country to play the role of an arrant coward, to belie the principles on which she is founded and for which she stands and to incriminate herself before the eyes of the world and the judgment bar of posterity.³

In words such as “moral crisis,” “American who preaches peace and submission,” and “arrant coward,” Wallace explained his change in perspective toward the war in Europe and argued that the United States must avoid being submissive and take direct action in confronting Germany. By invoking a sense of national manhood, Wallace described it as every patriotic man’s duty to support U.S. entry into World War I because to not do so would emasculate the nation by showing weakness and cowardice. With support for the war effort cast in these terms, the manliness of men who supported neutrality was brought into question.⁴

Thus, when the members of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association published their support for neutrality, they sought to articulate an alternative vision of national manhood. Led by juniors Norman E. Nygaard and Frank Holmes and sophomore Walter Lienke, the Association was organized in deprecation of “the spread of the militaristic spirit over our country, angered at the jingoistic policy pursued by the American press and believing in the futility of a war for honor.”⁵ Thus, the Association sought to identify an alternative vision of national manhood, one not marked by aggression and violence, but rather illustrated through

restraint and thoughtful consideration. Nygaard, Holmes, and Lienke drafted a set of seven resolutions stating their political views, and circulated copies around the campus for student signatures. In addition the petition received widespread support from the male student body, with



Walter Lienke was one of the leaders of Macalester's Neutrality and Peace Association.

the majority of the male members of the upper classes—fifteen out of nineteen senior men, and eighteen out of twenty-seven junior men—signing the petition.⁶

Because the petition was the origin of much controversy in St. Paul, with reverberations around the country, the whole of the list of “convictions” warrants a careful reading:

First—That, in order to prevent any criticisms of lack of loyalty or patriotism, we declare our love of America and the democratic ideals for which she stands, and affirm our willingness to risk or give our lives for America, whenever such a sacrifice may be necessary.

Second—That, in view of the fact that to depart from a position of neutrality as regards the present European war would only result in a prolongation of the conflict and an extension of its horrors to America, we earnestly urge our Government to adopt no measures which might endanger the continuance of this policy of neutrality.

Third—That, in view of the fact that Germany and Great Britain have declared

blockades of certain war zones on the sea, and have declared their intentions of enforcing these blockades by force, we urge patriotic American citizens to abstain from traveling through such war zones, lest, by their acts, they plunge their fellow citizens of America into war.

Fourth—That, in view of that fact that the munitions manufacturers are conducting a nation-wide campaign to force war upon the American people, we urge that our Government shall, as soon as it is possible, undertake the exclusive manufacture of war munitions in the United States, and, before such action can be arranged for, shall absolutely prohibit the munitions manufacturers from acquiring any profits whatsoever through the sale of munitions of war to the United States Government in times of war.

Fifth—That, in view of the jingoistic, unneutral and militaristic policy being pursued by the American press, we condemn and denounce its base and unreasonable treachery to the peace-loving and neutral American people.

Sixth—That, in view of the courage displayed during the last session of Congress, by the small minority who had the bravery to stand for what they thought to be the best interests of the American people, although assailed by the unprincipled business interests and press of our land, we express our hearty appreciation of the unexampled courage displayed by those men.

Seventh—That, in order to publish our convictions and to let the men of the brave minority of the last Congress know of our admiration, copies of the above resolutions shall be drawn up and mailed to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Senators of Minnesota now in Congress, to the men who defended the cause of neutrality in the last Congress, and to various others.⁷

Just as in the statements issued by James Wallace, in these declarations, the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association clearly articulated their conviction that it was the responsibility of the male populace to defend the honor of the (female) nation. In the statements issued by the Macalester students, courage is, however, marked by



Frank Holmes was a junior when he spoke out as a leader of the Neutrality and Peace Association.

steadfastness and holding true to one's ideals, not simply by the willingness to take up arms. The Neutrality and Peace Association did not have, however, the last words in this debate; the language the group used in its petition assured that its receipt would be met with a visceral response from those with pro-war sentiments in Congress.

The Newspapers Weigh In

Congressman Miller from Duluth, for example, quickly responded to the petition and wrote an open letter to the students in which he expressed his outrage with their views that was promptly picked up and published in newspapers throughout the Twin Cities. On March 21, 1917, the front page of the *Pioneer Press* read: "‘Treason,’ Says Miller to Cry from Student." After a brief introduction to the story, the paper then reprinted the entirety of Miller's letter, which opened,

Your amazing communication signed by 87 students, received. I am astounded that any group of students in a Minnesota college could have such opinions. You call yourselves neutral. You are not. You are pro-enemy and anti-American. . . . You say the munitions manufacturers are conducting a campaign to get us into war. That is

the cry of the yellow-streaked and cowardly soul that, when confronted by duty, seeks to justify its welching by ascribing improper conduct to others.⁸

Here, anti-Americanness and cowardice are conflated, and both positioned as effeminate. As such, Miller's words not only denounced the actions taken by the members of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association, but his choice of language also challenged their masculinity. Miller ignored the many well-articulated points made by the Neutrality and Peace Association, and instead distilled the issues using rhetoric that concentrated on conventionally understood male and female attributes. The Macalester community's immediate reaction to Miller's words was very strong. Initially, the opinions of both the faculty and the students were split. Then over the next few days, the press of the Twin Cities chronicled the dialogue that followed.

T.M. Hodgeman, then president of Macalester College, defended the actions of the students. Upon receipt of Congressman Miller's letter, Hodgeman gave a speech to the student body registering his support for the students. The *Pioneer Press* quoted Hodgeman as explaining, "It is a proper part of college training that students discuss public matters and form their own opinions. . . . The institution is not concerned in the matter. The faculty had nothing to do with the communication, and had no cause to criticize it. I am not a politician or a leader, just a college president, and do not intend to entertain the public with my personal views."⁹ The next day, Hodgeman sent a letter to all the major newspapers in the Twin Cities, arguing similar points and maintaining a position of "official neutrality."¹⁰ Significantly, Hodgeman's statements, while voicing support for the members of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association, also distanced the Macalester faculty and staff from the actions taken by the Association's members.

Another body within the Macalester community that sought to distance itself from the opinions expressed by the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association were the college alumni.

Although the geographic dispersion of Macalester alumni made a large meeting of those graduates impossible, the March 23, 1917, edition of the *St. Paul Dispatch* reported that the alumni in the metropolitan area would have the opportunity to sign "a set of resolutions expressing support of President Wilson and loyalty to the nation in the present crisis."¹¹ The president of the Macalester Alumni Association, Walter Mell Hobart, guided this effort, and although he did not publicly denounce the action taken by the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association, the fact that he thought it necessary to give alumni the opportunity to express their loyalty *in their capacity as Macalester alumni* is particularly illus-



Norman E. Nygaard was a leader of the Neutrality and Peace Association.

trative of the visceral effect Congressman Miller's verbal assault had upon the Macalester community at large.

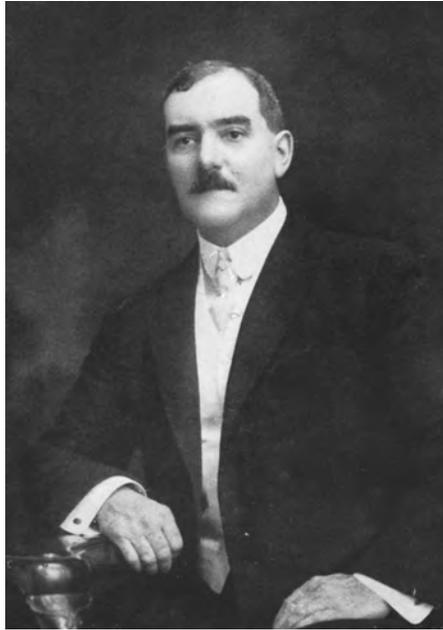
Not everyone within the Macalester community held back against directly critiquing the Neutrality and Peace Association, and as quickly became apparent, a large number of the college's faculty felt that President Hodgeman's efforts did not go far enough at distancing faculty opinion from the declarations proclaimed by the Association. Professor Wallace, who had so publicly repositioned

himself in Twin Cities newspapers less than three weeks earlier with his resignation from the Minnesota branch of the American Peace Society, rose to the occasion and became the official spokesman for the pro-war contingent among Macalester faculty. In reaction to the petition signed by the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association, Professor Wallace drafted a letter in support of active involvement in World War I, which was then signed by fourteen out of the seventeen faculty members, and then telegraphed to President Wilson. Wallace and the Macalester faculty did not stop there, however, because they also sent copies of this letter to the Twin Cities newspapers so that the local community would also understand that the opinions expressed by the Neutrality and Peace Association did not reflect those of the entire Macalester community. Indeed, Wallace was quoted in the *Pioneer Press* as explaining the necessity of the communication to “help correct the miserable showing made by the peace cranks in the college.”¹² The letter, which was published on the front page of the *Pioneer Press*, read:

Believing that permanent world peace is impossible until the bloody despotism of the Turkish empire and the arrogant absolutism of the Hohenzollerns are destroyed, we, the undersigned, do urge that the United States owes it to the cause of democracy, the rights of humanity and to its own good name to engage actively in the war and help overthrow those tyrannous and lawless survivals of a barbarous age.¹³

Wallace did not rest there; he went on to speak at patriotic meetings around the Twin Cities in order to defend the honor of Macalester as a patriotic and loyal institution.¹⁴

The student body at Macalester did not take Congressman Miller’s accusations lightly, either. In fact, the day after Congressman Miller’s letter of criticism was published in the press, another set of petitions, this time “promising loyalty to the President, asserting patriotism of Macalester, and condemning the ‘peace cranks’” were sent to Wilson and the Congress.¹⁵ The *St. Paul Dispatch* reported that eighty-eight students (one more than the number of students that



Thomas M. Hodgeman was president of Macalester in 1917.

had signed the original peace petition) had signed such loyalty petitions. While initially, Association spokesperson Frank Holmes suggested that it was only a few individuals who had retreated from their initial position, ultimately the majority of those who had signed the petition in support of neutrality signed the second set of resolutions, and offered their support for armed involvement.¹⁶ Seemingly overnight, many of the peace activists had changed their minds on the issue of American intervention and were ready to denounce participation in any sort of peace activism.

Some of the original petition signers, however, were willing to go a step further to prove their manhood. The day after the publication of Congressman Miller’s letter, many of the Twin Cities papers reported that four of the original signers had enlisted in the naval militia to “remove the blot” placed on the school by the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association’s petition.¹⁷ Morris Finstad, a Macalester freshman, told the *Pioneer Press*, “I signed the peace resolutions, but didn’t know what I was signing. Some one is always passing resolutions around and a fellow has to sign for friendship’s sake. . . . I enlisted in the naval militia to show that I am for America first, last, and

all the time. I am not a coward.”¹⁸ In this way, Finstad explained both his initial involvement with the Neutrality and Peace Association and his enlistment in terms of masculinity; he felt pressured to sign the initial set of resolutions out of a sense of brotherly solidarity, and then once he felt that the peace petition had jeopardized the honor of Macalester, he felt the need to assert his masculinity through enlistment. In addition, Finstad’s statement brings into question the motives of the other students who signed the initial petition; it seems as if many may not have firmly believed all of the sentiments that their signatures supported, and once their masculinity was called into question, they quickly acted to prove themselves.

Others who signed the original declarations were not so willing to distance themselves from the opinions expressed in the petition, however. In response to the faculty’s loyalty petition, Association leader and spokesperson Frank Holmes told *The St. Paul Dispatch*, “The action of several of the Macalester faculty in signing a petition asking for war only emphasizes the courage and independence of the members of the Neutrality and Peace Association who took a stand wholly because of personal convictions. . . . the fact that a very few students who signed the resolutions have backed down is simply a sign that there are always persons quick to retract from a criticized position.”¹⁹ Of particular significance here is Holmes’s word choice; after Congressman Miller called the members of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association cowards, Holmes answers back by asserting their “courage.” As such, Holmes puts forth a new definition of courage—one that is defined by steadfastness rather than militarism.

An Alternative Vision

Similar rhetoric was deployed by Irving Roth, *Mac Weekly* editor and signer of the original peace petition, in a letter published in the student paper. Here Roth explained the actions of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association to the student body. The editorial was not only a reaction to the name-calling that had gone on in the press, but also an explanation

of the motives behind the petition's creation. Roth wrote,

When, at the end of the last session of Congress, President Wilson asked that he be given power to meet all eventualities, it was felt by a sober, thinking group of Macalester students that this was too great a responsibility for one man to assume. There seemed a tremendous conspiring process to grant him this power in that last few days of Congress. It was against such action that the Macalester protest was chiefly lodged. The protest portrayed a condition of events as Macalester students felt them and they counseled cautiousness on the part of our representatives. It was not a peace at any price appeal. Its very first lines expressed a willingness to serve at the country's first call. The basis of the appeal was caution against coercion by a part of the press that has shown itself to be influenced. It was a frank statement of opinion made by a group of men who were not afraid to state their convictions. The basis of the appeal was loyalty to the country first, in service second, in frank expression of views which is so necessary to the health and vigor of a democracy.²⁰

In these words, Roth presents the campus community with an alternative vision of national manhood—one defined not by passion, but sobriety; one whose vigor is marked not by willingness to engage in aggression but rather willingness to engage in debate. Significantly, even though the Neutrality and Peace Association mailed copies of its resolutions to the editors of every major newspaper in the Twin Cities, the exact words of these resolutions were never published. Rather, newspapers chose to only use Congressman Miller's interpretation of the petition's actual convictions in their references to the petition's intentions.²¹ Thus, Roth's editorial was one of the few times during the entire controversy in which the authors of the declarations had the opportunity to express the rationale behind their actions, and as such, Roth's rhetoric is all the more significant.

In addition, Roth himself is also of significance here. Irving Roth, a senior at Macalester in 1917, had, at the time of the publication of this editorial, made plans to join the French Ambulance Corps. Thus, his loyalty to America could not be brought into question if the edito-

rial were to cause further controversy. On the other hand, Frank Holmes, who had been the press spokesperson throughout the controversy, was not chosen to write the editorial, even though he was serving as the editor-in-chief of the *Mac Weekly* at the time. Frank Holmes had no plans to enlist in any branch of the armed services, and returned to Macalester the next



Irving Roth signed the 1917 peace petition. He subsequently volunteered for military service and died in combat.

fall to graduate with the class of 1918. Significantly, this class had twenty-seven males in 1917, and yet only eleven other men graduated with Holmes in 1918—the rest had all enlisted.²² Perhaps Holmes's unwillingness to enlist in the armed services disqualified him from writing the editorial explaining the actions of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association because his voice would have rendered the Association as effeminate in the opinion of many in the Macalester community.

By the fall of 1917, the events that took place the preceding March seemed to be far removed from the community's consciousness. Indeed, the Macalester community seems to have quickly forgotten all about the events of March 1917 and in-

stead rallied behind its boys in the service. By that time, seventy-two Macalester males had entered military service and were represented in every branch. Macalester used this fact as evidence of its loyalty to America, as evidenced by the October 1917 edition of the *Macalester College Bulletin*, a publication sent to alumni and prospective students:

Macalester College has declared war with the Central Powers of Europe. There is probably no college in the United States that can boast so large a percentage of her male population at the fighting front as Macalester. . . . She intends to stay in the war until every vestige of militarism, of despotism, of barbarism, is stamped out and until reparation and restitution is made for the suffering inflicted upon neutral and helpless people.²³

Furthermore, in the fall of 1917, Dr. Wallace was still speaking at churches and other public meetings in order to rally support for American participation in the war.²⁴ The college made every effort to dissociate itself from public image of Macalester as the home of the eighty-seven "yellow-streaked" petition signers, and struggled to prove the loyalty and courage of its students. Luckily for the college, having the majority of the petition signers join the armed services was enough to convince the public that Macalester was a school that fostered American values.

In fact, even the men who had signed the original Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association petition seemed to have quickly abandoned their neutral stances. In November 1917, the *Mac Weekly* published a letter home from former "peace crank" Irving Roth in which his ideological about-face could not have been clearer: "I am very glad I am in the war. I never knew that I could come to hate the German military party so cheerfully as I have. Just before leaving the front a German plane bombarded our small hospital, killing five of my friends and re-wounding many. It is such things that have brot [sic] Germany to her certain doom."²⁵ Unfortunately, it was Roth's "cheerful" hate of the German military that ultimately caused his death in aerial combat on September 28, 1918.

Another member of the Macalester

Neutrality and Peace Association that later professed devotion to the armed services was Norman E. Nygaard. Nygaard was one of the founding members of the Association, and his name appears first or second on all but one of the seven copies of the peace petitions that circulated on the Macalester campus in March 1917. Nygaard, however, did not return to Macalester in the fall of 1917; instead he enlisted in the Ambulance Corps. He returned to Macalester at the end of the war and graduated with the class of 1920.²⁶ He went on to become a chaplain and editor of several books, including *America Prays: Daily Devotions for the Whole Year*; *Strength for Service to God and Country: Daily Devotional Messages for Those in the Service*; and *Keep 'Em Flying: Sermons to Men in the Armed Forces*. The last of these books, published in 1945, was a collection of sermons that he gave while serving as chaplain with a Lockheed Overseas unit. In the forward of this book, Nygaard wrote, "It is the firm belief of the author that the great majority of them—the boys who will come back home will be better men for the experiences which they have had."²⁷ Thus, even though Norman E. Nygaard had once helped to draft resolutions in support of neutrality, he later professed feelings of legitimacy for the act of serving in the military.

Making Sense of the Controversy

Making sense of the events surrounding the original petition that was signed by the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association requires an understanding of the power of gender as a cultural motivator. Removed from the time and place that these events unfolded, it seems illogical that a young man who signed a petition discouraging President Wilson from entering the war would enlist on his own free will, and then proclaim "I am very glad I am in the war" in a letter home nine months later.²⁸ These events, however, make more sense when looked at with respect to the pervasive notions of masculinity at the time.

Many scholars have argued that rhetoric involving notions of masculinity and femininity are particularly useful tools in generating support for national

military expeditions. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, was a vocal critic of the degeneration of American masculinity that he perceived at the end of the nineteenth century. Consequently, Roosevelt urged American men to take up weapons and participate in overseas expansion as a means to regain the masculinity that was once forged in combat. He called for the strenuous life, stating "the old iron days have gone . . . the days when the weakling died as the penalty of inability to hold his own in the rough warfare against his surroundings. We live in softer times. Let us see to it that, while we take advantage of every gentler and more humanizing tendency of the old age, we yet preserve the iron quality which made our forefathers and our predecessors do the deeds they did."²⁹ Although Roosevelt wrote these words sixteen years prior to the controversy at Macalester, his appeal uses language that is very similarly to the rhetoric found in the statements of Congressman Miller and Professor Wallace during the spring of 1917.

Indeed, as historian T.J. Jackson Lears wrote in his book, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920*, the notion that military service would regenerate national manhood was pervasive in the years prior to World War I. He writes, "To bourgeois moralists preoccupied by the decadence and disorder of their society, the warrior's willingness to suffer and die for duty's sake pointed the way to national purification; to those who craved authentic selfhood, the warrior's life personified wholeness of purpose and intensity of experience. War promised both social and personal regeneration."³⁰ For those males who were struggling to define their own ideology, accepting the social role of soldier proved to be a viable option.

Furthermore, the Twin Cities press used similar words to persuade males to support the war. The press, for example, specifically took advantage of the power of the word "coward" in its criticisms of those who did not support the war effort. Since the word had such loaded implications, its use in the press was effective in rallying support for the war. This stance, however, may also have acknowledged

the unspoken investment that the Twin Cities newspapers had in supporting the war. The newspapers' editorial leaders understood that most Minnesota businesses were favorably inclined toward the war because of its potential to bring military contracts to the state, which had the potential to boost their bottom lines. Thus, by the spring of 1917, in the words of the biographer of S. A. Stockwell, a state legislator from south Minneapolis who actively opposed U.S. involvement in the war, the press "had become intolerant of those unwilling to recognize the need to discipline Germany. Targeted in particular were trade unionists, socialists, and German-Americans."³¹ Consequently the newspapers of the Twin Cities jumped at the opportunity to demonize the peace activists by giving such prominent attention to Congressman Miller's harsh criticism.

When President Wilson officially sought a declaration war on Germany from the Congress on April 6, 1917, the American public rallied behind him like never before. Even the staunchest advocates of neutrality supported the president in his war declaration. As Carl H. Chrislock wrote in *The Progressive Era in Minnesota, 1899–1918*, "Whatever the war had been before American entry, it was now a crusade against tyranny."³² Any male who did not support a fight against tyranny was opening himself up to attacks on his patriotism, honor, and worst of all, his masculinity.

The peace activists at Macalester were not the only citizens who fell prey to the rhetoric of masculinity and femininity that the press used in the run-up to war in the spring of 1917. They were simply among the many men who dropped their pacifistic or socialist ideals in order to identify with the more pervasive definitions of national manhood. Indeed, many activists may have supported neutrality more in theory than in practice. As George L. Mosse wrote in *The Image of Man*,

Socialists during the First World War had tried to put forward the stereotype of a more peaceful masculinity dependent on solidarity rather than struggle, but these who were disillusioned with the war also took stock of their manhood, and even if they were embittered by the carnage, nevertheless despite themselves, proved the strength of the

normative stereotype. Much cited antiwar poets and writers . . . were apt to criticize the reason for fighting but not the fighting itself.

The attempt by socialists to redefine masculinity that Mosse found is very similar to the way in which Frank Holmes articulated an alternative form of masculinity in his interview with the *St. Paul Dispatch* in the spring of 1917. In both instances, these attempts at the redefinition could not fundamentally alter dominant perceptions of proper masculinity.

Although individuals who are familiar with the present-day Macalester student body may be surprised to learn that the majority of male students at the college enlisted in World War I, this statistic is not in and of itself unusual. In fact, many of the earliest enlistment volunteers were students at the best American colleges. As historian David Kennedy explains in his book, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, "It was, in short, the nation's most carefully cultivated youths, the most privileged recipients of the finest education, steeped in the values of the genteel tradition, who most believed the archaic doctrines about war's noble and heroic possibilities."³⁴ For men at prestigious American colleges and universities during America's entrance into World War I, enlisting offered them what potentially could have been their last great adventure. War offered the potential for travel, action, and heroism, three things that were likely to appeal to college men who would otherwise be entering the workforce after graduation.

In the context of the pervading notions of masculinity in America at the time of World War I, the actions take by the members of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association and other members of the Macalester community can clearly be understood. Although the enlistments or confessions of loyalty on behalf of the original petition signers may seem at first to be classic examples of the flightiness of youth, analysis through the lens of masculinity reveals the true reasons behind their actions. Upon receipt of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association's resolutions, Congressman Miller denounced the students in the press by accusing them of cowardice.

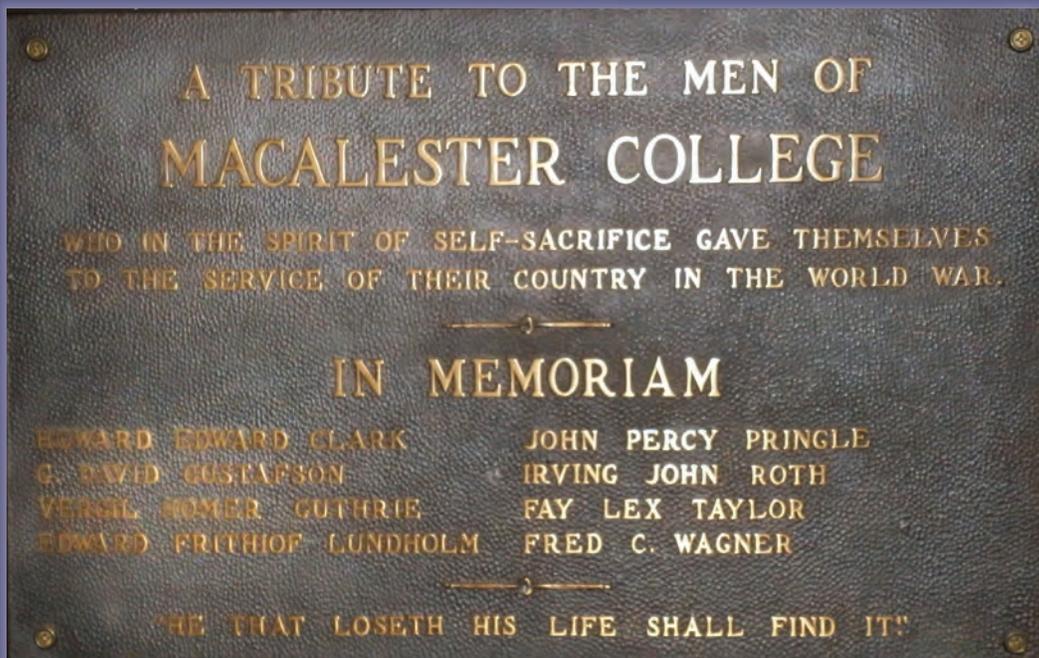
His explosive language magnified what would seem to be a very small event in the history of Macalester College and St. Paul. As the events became more and more dramatic, and the position of peace activist became increasingly tenuous in public opinion, and many members of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association subsequently chose to abandon their earlier position and rally behind the president and support the war against Germany. By doing so, they not

only defended the honor of Macalester, which had been brought into question by Congressman Miller's letter, but also gave voice to language that reinforced the conventional notions of masculinity.

Emily Skidmore graduated from Macalester College in 2004, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She wrote an earlier version of this article for an undergraduate research seminar.

Endnotes

1. "Charges Minnesota School with Betraying American," *New York Herald*, March 21, 1917, James Wallace Collection, Macalester College Archives, St. Paul, Minnesota. Congressman Clarence Miller (1872–1922) represented Minnesota's Eighth District. First elected in 1908, he was unsuccessful in his bid for reelection in 1918. For a brief account of the controversy at Macalester in 1917, see Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota, 1899–1918* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1971), 133–34.
2. "Dozen Senators Block Action in National Crisis," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, March 5, 1917, p. 1.
3. From pages 2–3 of a letter written by James Wallace to the editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, James Wallace Collection, Macalester College Archives, St. Paul, Minnesota.
4. Several scholars have recently examined the use of rhetoric based on use of gender for the purpose of gathering public support for military conflict. See, for example, Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
5. Resolutions of the Macalester Neutrality and Peace Association, March 1917. War World I Collection, Macalester College Archives, St. Paul, Minnesota.
6. Although Macalester was a coed institution in 1917, all eighty-seven signers of the petition were male. "Mac Peace Criers Unmoved, Despite Alumni's Apology," *St. Paul Dispatch*, March 22, 1917, p. 4.
7. Ibid.
8. "'Treason,' Say Miller to Cry From Student," *Pioneer Press*, March 21, 1917, p. 1.
9. Ibid.
10. "'Mac' Head Wants Peace With Honor," *The St. Paul Daily News*, March 22, 1917, p. 1.
11. "Macalester Alumni Will Have a Chance to Show Loyalty," *The St. Paul Dispatch*, March 23, 1917, p. 14.
12. "War on Kaiser Is Urged Now at Macalester," *Pioneer Press*, March 22, 1917, p. 1.
13. Ibid.
14. "Macalester Prof. To Speak At Flag Rally," *The St. Paul Dispatch*, March 23, 1917, p. 18.
15. "War on Kaiser Is Urged Now at Macalester," 1.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. "Mac Peace Crier Unmoved, Despite Alumni's Apology," *The St. Paul Dispatch*, March 22, 1917, p. 4.
20. Irving Roth, "As for Macalester Patriotism," *Mac Weekly*, March 28, 1917, p. 2.
21. Ibid.
22. Hakala Associates, *Macalester College: A Century and Beyond* (St. Paul: Macalester College, 1985), 27–38.
23. *Macalester College Bulletin* (October 1917): 4–5.
24. Ibid., 5.
25. *A Century and Beyond*, 38–39.
26. *The Mac*. (St. Paul: Macalester College, 1920), 48.
27. Norman E. Nygaard, *Keep 'Em Flying* (New York: The Hobson Book Press, 1945), viii.
28. *A Century and Beyond*, 39.
29. Theodore Roosevelt to Hermann Speck von Sternberg, November 9, 1901, in Elting E. Morison, ed., *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 3:192.
30. T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 98.
31. William P. Everts, Jr., *Stockwell of Minneapolis: A Pioneer of Social and Political Conscience* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, Inc., 1996), 198.
32. Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota, 1899–1918* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1971), 135.
33. George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 108.
34. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 80.



Sometime after the Armistice of November 11, 1918, Macalester College honored those members of its community who gave their lives in the service of the United States during World War I. The college mounted this bronze plaque in Old Main hall. Photo courtesy of Emily Skidmore. See Emily Skidmore's article on page 14.

R.C.H.S.
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Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
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