

Arkansas Declaration of Learning
Butler Center for Arkansas Studies
Central Arkansas Library System



WWI Veteran Family Interview
With Claudia Smith, granddaughter of Private David Wesley Huett, III
By Alex Crawford, LR Central High School, Class of 2018

In this audio interview a student invites his school librarian to re-tell stories she learned as a child about her grandfather's experiences in WWI: as a medic, ambulance driver, and POW escort. In selected excerpts she also recounts her grandfather's own POW stories of battle injury, capture, and escape—and of his efforts to cope with shell-shock trauma during his lifetime after the war.

Students can use this oral history interview to study and honor the service of Arkansas men, women and families in the First World War—or the Great War, as it was then called. More than 72,000 Arkansas sons served in the war; nearly 2,200 became casualties—300 being killed in action, 100 more dying of battle wounds, and hundreds more falling victim to the influenza pandemic of 1918.

The interview demonstrates a way that students today can work with veterans organizations to collect, preserve, and share the personal remembrances of veteran families in their own community. The stories in this interview acknowledge the service rendered but also reveals the impacts of the war on a generation of Arkansas families.

This object highlights other opportunities students have to contribute to the statewide commemoration of World War during the centennial observances in 2017-18. Students can take part in a variety of ways in the Butler Center's WWI Student Digital History Project, creating projects that can be shared as teaching resources in other classrooms around the state. (See links to lesson plans for multiple student projects, in partnership with community veteran groups and local history archives.) Completed projects will be published via the Arkansas History Hub website for teachers, naming contributing students, schools, and community partners in Author Credits that can be used in college and job applications.

Meanwhile, using this interview and related materials, students can explore a number of important questions raised by this era in American and Arkansas history: What changed a President's mind (Woodrow Wilson) and our nation's sympathies from avoiding Europe's conflict to joining the war? What effect did this shift have in Arkansas on those who remained skeptical of foreign entanglement? What—and who—mobilized Arkansas's economy and population and put the state on a wartime footing? What role did women play in this effort, and how did their organizing for the war effort affect other efforts to win voting rights and job opportunities for the women of Arkansas? In what ways did African Americans contribute to the cause of war, and to what degree did their patriotism earn them greater respect and rights in Jim Crow Arkansas and America? How did America's going to war against the "Huns" affect attitudes in Arkansas toward the large number of German-American families around the state? What were the lasting impacts of WWI on life in Arkansas? What evidence and what echoes of this war remain for students today to discover in their own communities?

To address these questions students can use multiple resources from the Butler Center:

Butler Center Books

To Can the Kaiser: Arkansas and the Great War (2015) edited by Michael D. Polston and Guy Lancaster
Faithful to Their Tasks: Arkansas's Women and the Great War (2017) by Elizabeth Hill

Encyclopedia of Arkansas articles (www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net)

Early 20th Century, 1901-40: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=403>

WWI Memorial Markers: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7438>

World War I: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2401>

Herman Davis: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=48>

Camp Pike (Robinson): <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2262>

Germans in Arkansas: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2731>

Women's Suffrage: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4252>

Arkansas Flu Epidemic: <http://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/lessonplans/id/67/rec/11>

Clinton Briggs, Lynching of: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8254>

The Elaine 12: <http://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/lessonplans/id/140/rec/1>

Cleburne County Draft War: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=3637>

Logan County Draft War: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8552>

Newton County Draft War: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8553>

Polk County Draft War: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8550>

Searcy County Draft War: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8551>

Butler Center Online Collections: Arkansas and the Great War

Arkansas and The Great War: <https://www.butlercenter.org/arkansas-and-the-great-war/>

*Digital Gallery (view 763 items)

<http://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/collection/p15728coll3!p15728coll1/searchterm/arkansas%20and%20the%20great%20war/field/all/mode/exact/conn/and/order/title>

*Videos: Camp Pike History:

http://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/searchterm/pike_161110/field/all/mode/all/conn/and/order/nosort/ad/asc/cosuppress/0

Arkansas History Hub (www.arhistoryhub.com)

World War I Student Digital History Project: <http://www.arhistoryhub.com/student-produced-content/world-war-i-student-digital-history-project>

Also see: WWI War Neuroses, War Archives (3 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWHbF5jGY0W>