



Susan Eck is a native Western New Yorker. After a career in teaching, she was an administrator at UB. It was there she became technologically literate and, since retiring, she has applied those skills to illuminating local history on the web.

Now in her third career as a student of local history, she has been a guest curator and created virtual exhibits for the Buffalo History Museum. She has two websites, one on Western New York history (wnyhistory.org); the other on the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (panam1901.org).

Contact: 716.689.4771

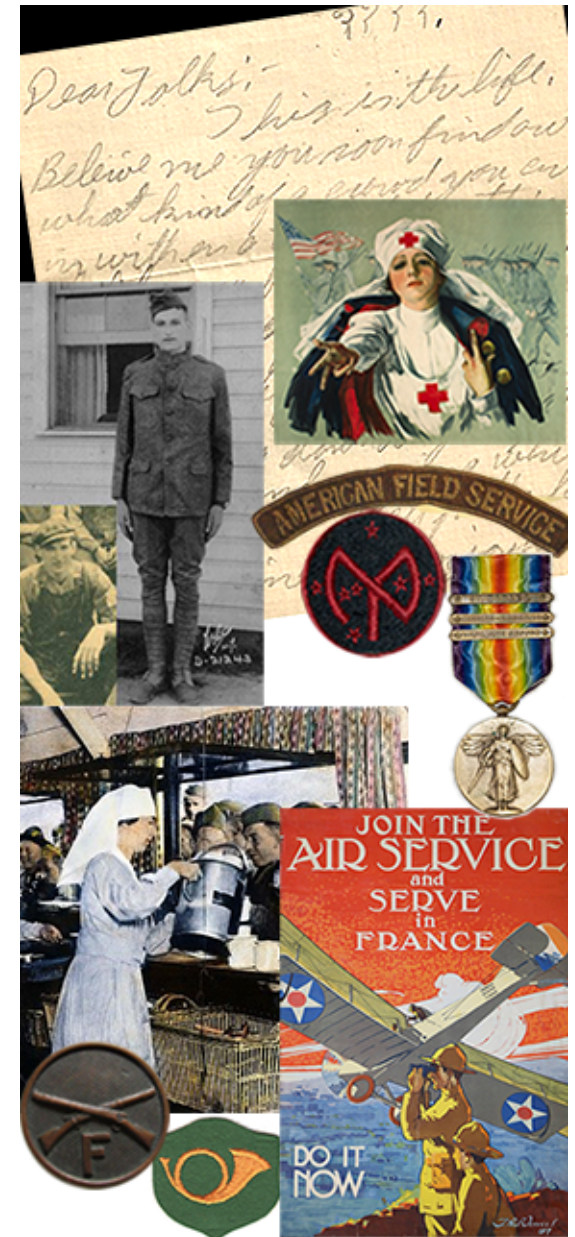
sjeck3435@gmail.com

Fee: \$50

Their Great Adventure:

Western New Yorkers

In World War 1



The Women

WNY women who went abroad were varied in their background and motivations but felt compelled to find a way to help the French and British armies, the Belgian and French refugees, and later the 4.7 million American “Sammies” who joined the war in 1917. About all these volunteers had in common was that they were single, educated, and most were from well-to-do families.

Listen to Alice Lord O’Brian and Anna Perit Rochester as they describe opening the first Red Cross Canteens in 1917, serving French soldiers until the Americans arrived. Enjoy Doris Kellogg’s exuberance over being able to assist in a hospital and canteens. And see how Mary Belknap’s experience with the wounded and her own struggle with the pneumonia that accompanied influenza drove her to come home to Lockport as soon as possible when the war ended.

Each presentation is Powerpoint with lively narration. Running time each: 45 minutes.

The Men

The “Eager” young men, like Laurence Dana Rumsey and Harry Ramsdell, Jr. went abroad as early as 1915 to volunteer as ambulance drivers with the American Field Service. Others volunteered for ambulance duty as soon as the U.S. entered the war in April 1917.

The “Willing” were career soldiers such as Akron native Dennis Nolan, a West Point graduate who would end his service in the war as a Brigadier General. Others from around Western New York were called up immediately when war was declared because they were National Guardsmen with the 74th or 65th Regiments. And William Donovan of Troop I, New York State Cavalry, transferred quickly to the 42nd Division, the “Rainbow” division, in order to go abroad as soon as possible.

The “Reluctant” were part of the 2.8 million men called up through the draft, instituted on May 18, 1917. They were young men for the most part, and reported for duty when asked, in what would be an unforgettable introduction to war on an industrial scale.

The Aviators

In a class by themselves, early WNY volunteers for aviation served primarily with the French in the Lafayette Escadrille. American squadrons were formed after April 1917 but organizing, training, and equipping the new Army Air Service took so long that only 45 all-American squadrons fought in France by the end of war. See how John Knox MacArthur, Nathaniel Duffy, Laurence Dana Rumsey dared to fly their “peach crates” in dog fights with the superior German pilots. Learn how Buffalo’s Aero Club and the Curtiss Aeroplane Company helped move WNY into the forefront of aviation.

*What marching men of Buffalo
Flood the streets in rash crusade?
Fools-to-free-the-world, they go,
Primeval hearts from Buffalo.*

Vachel Lindsay, American poet