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World War I Era Drawings from French School Children Viewable for First Time in Special Exhibition Opening March 21 at National World War I Museum and Memorial

Exhibition images available upon request

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - When the Great War started in the summer of 1914, a school teacher in the Montmartre district of Paris asked his students, boys ages 8-13, to write essays and express in drawings how the war affected their daily lives.

The children produced hundreds of drawings and essays reflecting on the changing nature of the war, political leaders, letters to their relatives on the front line, and daily food rationing. Despite these changes, the students still went to class, did their homework, and continued their lives as normally as possible.

For the first time anywhere in the world, a portion of these drawings will be available for public viewing in the special exhibition [*Vive l'Amérique! French Children Welcome Their American Ally*](#), opening Tuesday, March 21. The exhibition showcases 30 drawings and two essays on loan to the Museum from Le Vieux Montmartre Historical Society.

"Vive l'Amérique! French School Children Welcome Their American Ally provides the opportunity to view tangible examples of children articulating and imagining how the United States entering World War I affected their lives," said National World War I Museum and Memorial Archivist and Edward Jones Center Research Manager Jonathan Casey. "The symbolism within the drawings and the insights we gain into the mindset of these children is truly remarkable."

In April 1917 when the U.S. declared war on Germany, the students reflected upon what this action meant to them and how it could make a difference in the war's outcome through both writing and drawing. The students drew a range of subjects including depictions of French people enthusiastically welcoming American soldiers, these "doughboys" in camp practicing training maneuvers in Montmartre, and the students' daily relations with the Parisians.

The items predominantly focus on America entering the war, while other drawings depict the students playing war in the neighborhood, attending class, and one of an American relief organization's workers serving meals to needy Parisians. The drawings also depict and emphasize the historical connection between France and America, dating to the American War of Independence and various expressions of the Franco-American alliance.



“In the scope of a monumental event such as World War I, the unfortunate reality is that many stories remain untold,” said National World War I Museum and Memorial President and CEO Dr. Matthew Naylor. “In this special exhibition, we provide a platform for the voices of a significant group to be heard: those of children in Paris during the Great War.”

Vive l’Amerique: French Children Welcome Their American Ally is open Mar. 21 – Oct. 15, 2017 in the Ellis Gallery. The exhibition is supported by the Francis Family Foundation, the Abend Family Philanthropic Fund, and Cyprienne Simchowicz and Gerald White.

About the National World War I Museum and Memorial

The National World War I Museum and Memorial is America’s leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum holds the most diverse collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America’s official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National World War I Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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