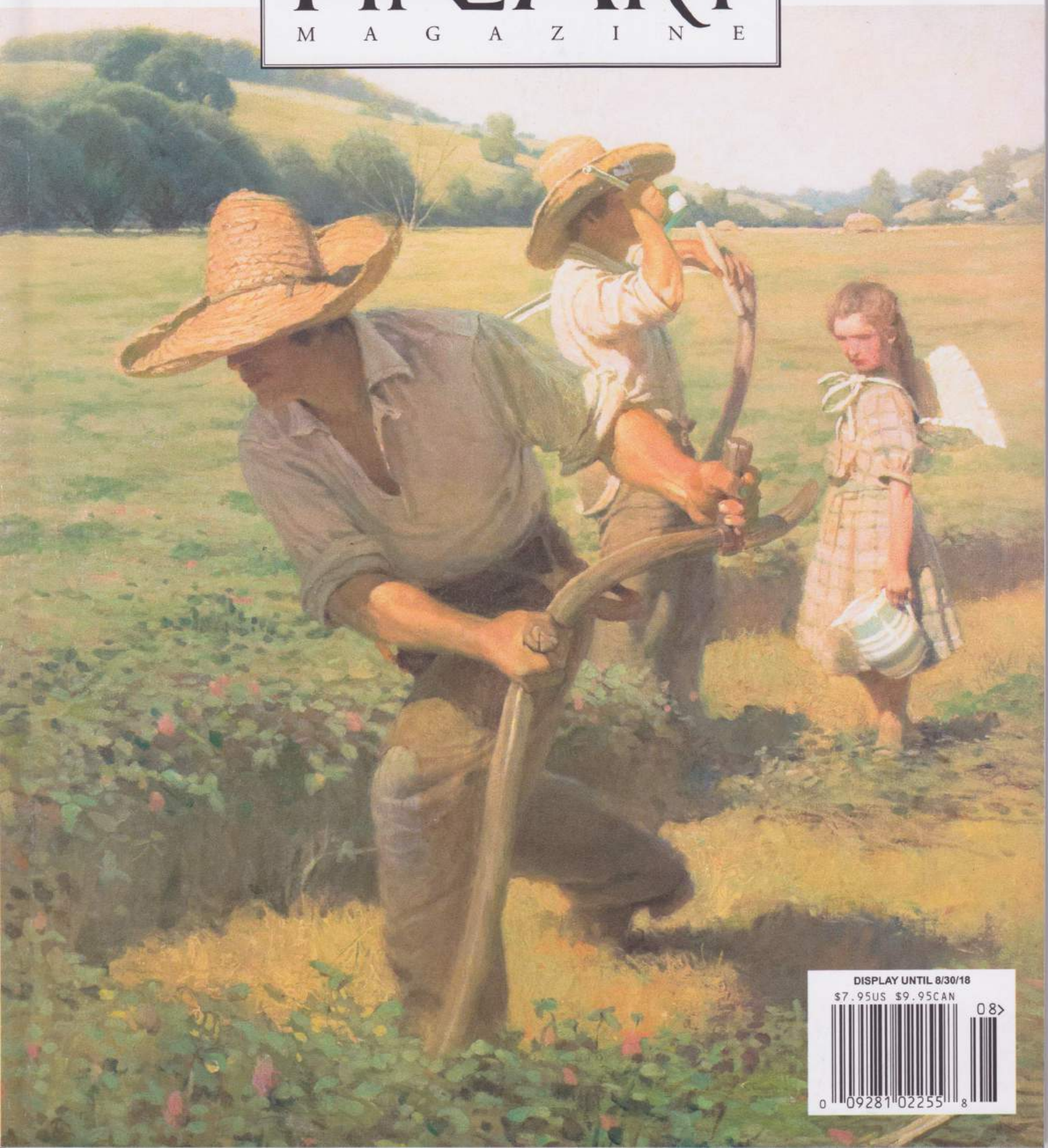
PREVIEWING UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS, SALES AND AUCTIONS OF HISTORIC FINE ART

AMERICAN FINE ART MAGAZINE

ISSUE 40

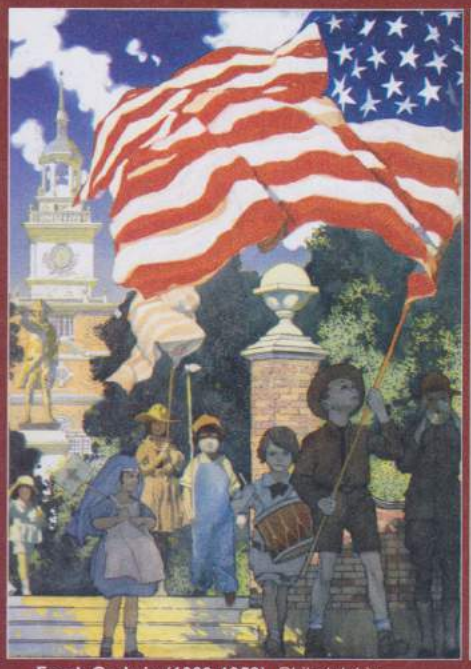
JULY/AUGUST 2018



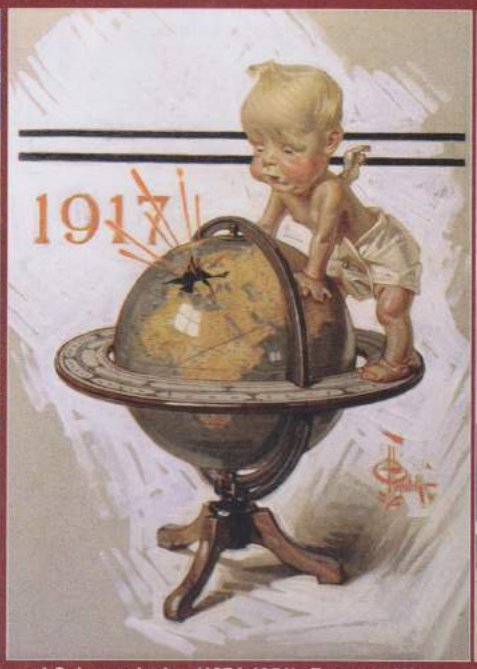
AMERICAN ILLUSTRATORS GALLERY

PREMIERE EXHIBITOR, BUYER, & SELLER OF AMERICAN ILLUSTRATION ART, FEATURING
NORMAN ROCKWELL | MAXFIELD PARRISH | NC WYETH | JC LEYENDECKER & 150 OTHERS

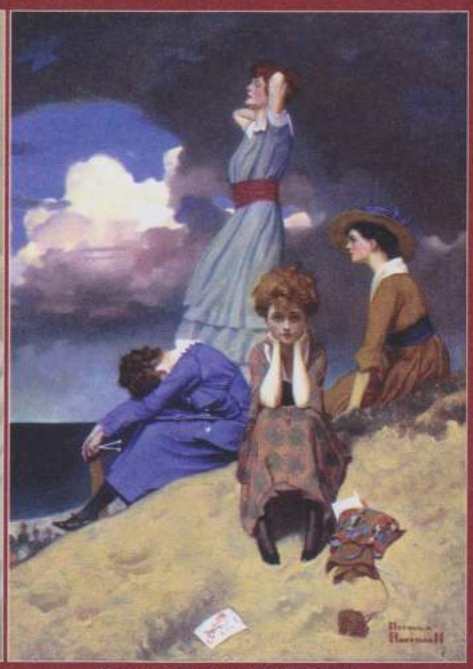
18 EAST 77TH STREET | NEW YORK | NEW YORK | 10075
AMERICANILLUSTRATORS.COM | 212·744·5190 | ART@AMERICANILLUSTRATORS.COM



Frank Godwin (1889-1959), *Philadelphia Patriotic Scene,* 1917, gouache on board
WW1 Poster and War Savings Stamps Drive



J.C. Leyendecker (1874-1951), *Europe at War - New Year's Baby 1917,* 1916, oil on canvas,
Saturday Evening Post, December 30, 1916 cover

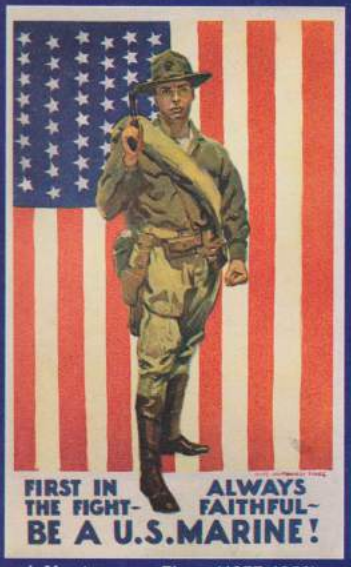


Norman Rockwell (1894-1978),
Till the Boys Come Home, 1918, oil on canvas,
Life Magazine, August 15, 1918 cover

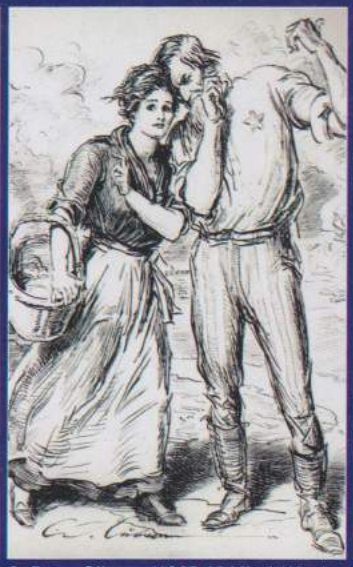
The National Museum of American Illustration

Presents the Premiere of

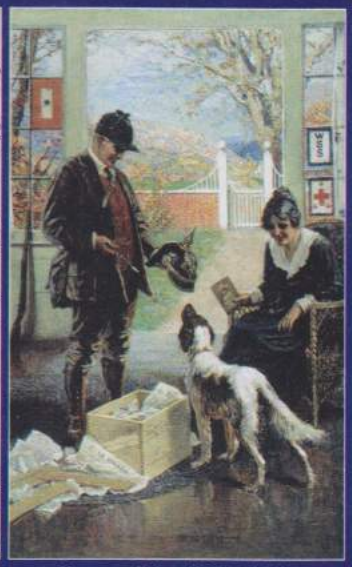
American Illustration & The First World War



J. Montgomery Flagg (1877-1950),
First in the Fight, 1922, lithograph
U.S. Marine recruiting poster



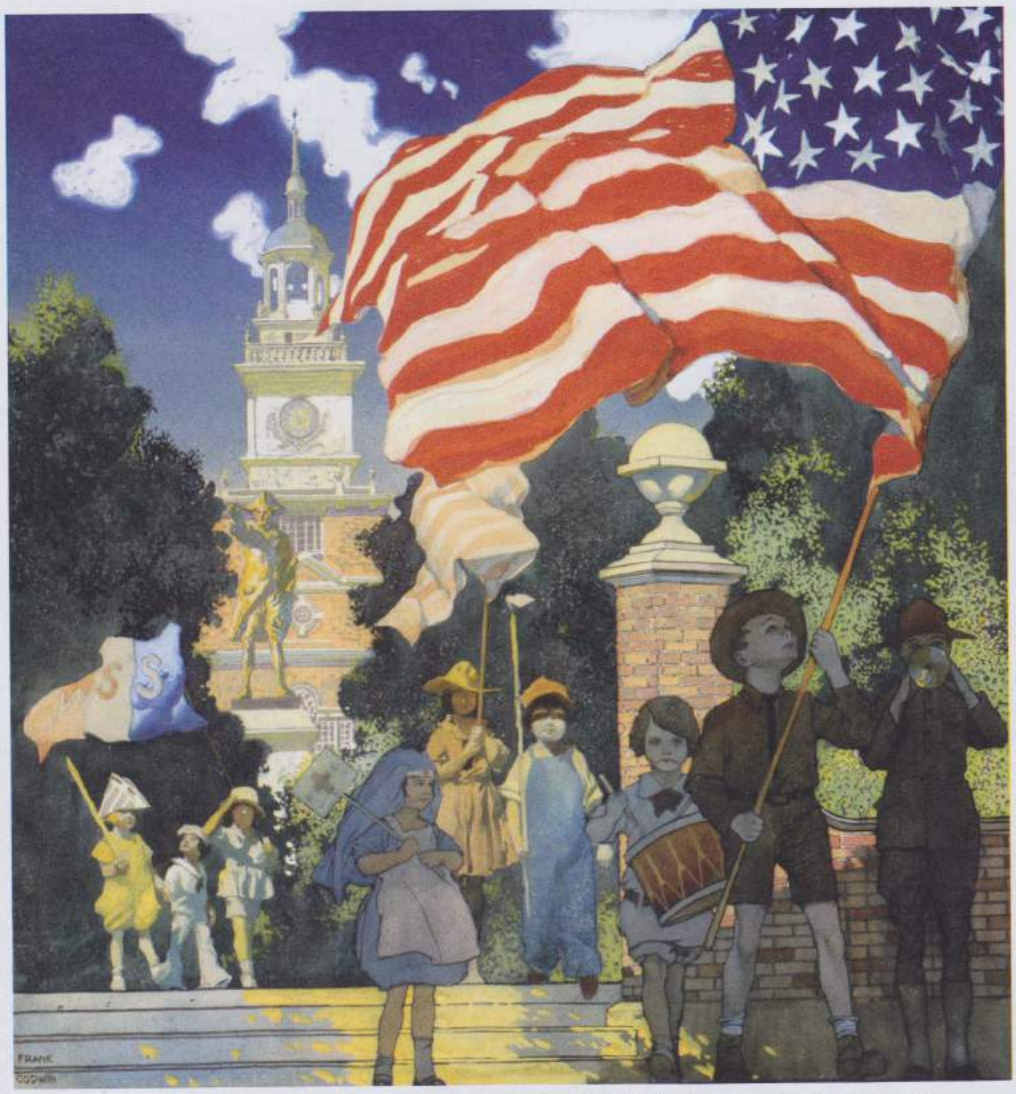
C. Dana Gibson (1867-1944), *A Word to the Wives: Save!,* 1918, pen and ink
Red Cross Mag., Jan. 18, 1918 cover



Norman Price (1877-1951),
Bagged in France, 1918, oil on canvas
Hercules Sporting Powders Calendar

Griswold Tyng (1883-1960),
Uncle Sam, 1918, gouache on board
WW1 Poster

Open Memorial Day to Labor Day Weekend • Thursday - Sunday, 11am - 5pm
Vernon Court • 492 Bellevue Avenue • Newport, RI • 02840
T: 401.851.8949 ext. 18 • E: art@americanillustration.org • W: americanillustration.org



Frank Godwin (1889-1959), *Philadelphia Patriotic Scene*, 1917, for World War I poster and War Savings Stamps Drive. Gouache on board, 18½ x 17 in., signed lower left. Opposite page: **Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)**, *Till the Boys Come Home*, for a *Life Magazine* cover, August 15, 1916. Oil on canvas, 29½ x 23½ in., signed lower right.

ARMY *of* ARTISTS

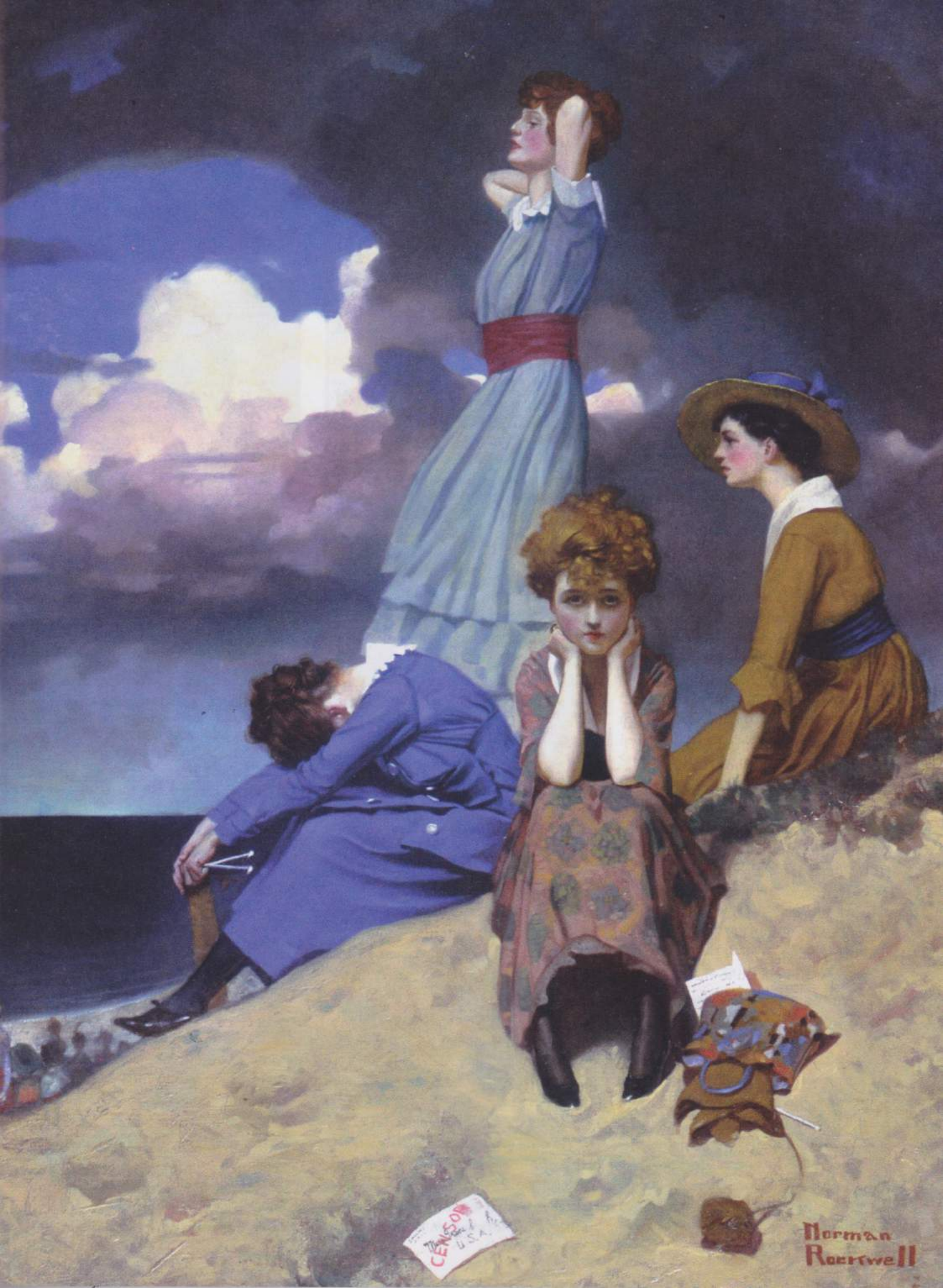
While soldiers fought in Europe during World War I, American artists and illustrators waged war from a different front—their easels

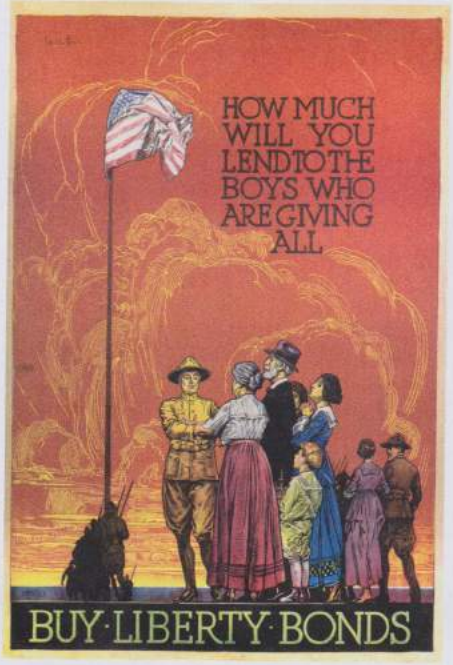
By Michael Clawson

When Woodrow Wilson ran for president, an office he would eventually win in 1912, he campaigned as a pacifist. Later, as World War I heated up in Europe, Wilson was determined to stay out of the war, even imploring Americans to maintain a position of neutrality to the great conflict taking place thousands of miles away. "Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned," he proclaimed in 1914 in an official statement to the American people, many of whom shared his hesitancy to get involved in world affairs.

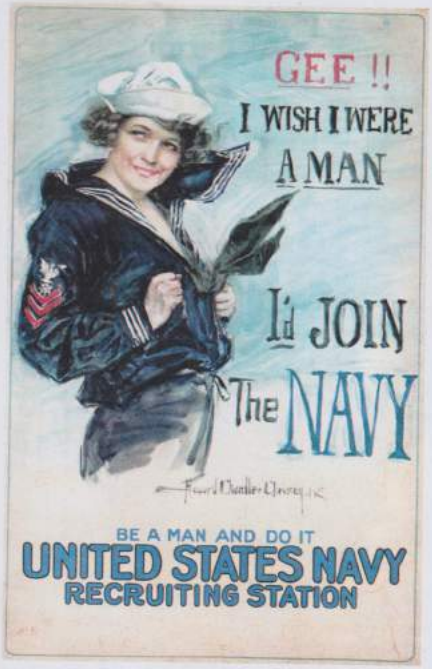
By 1915, German submarines were sinking boats throughout the Atlantic, including the Lusitania, which went down off the coast of Ireland, taking nearly 1,200 souls with it. President Wilson's resolve for neutrality was quickly collapsing.

The rest, of course, is in the history books, usually in a chapter

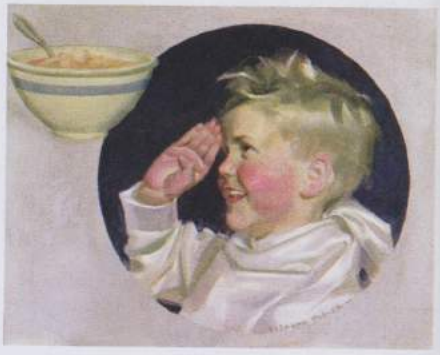

CENSOR
U.S.A.
Norman Rockwell

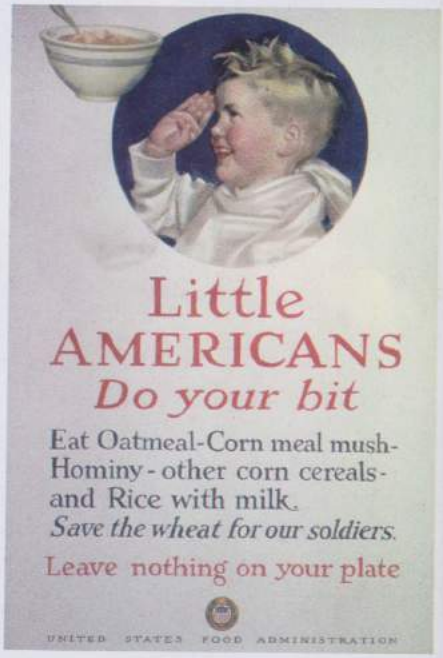


Franklin Booth (1874-1948), *How Much Will You Lend to the Boys Who Are Giving All.* Lithograph, 41⅛ x 27¼ in., signed upper left. United States Printing & Lithographic Co., New York.



Howard Chandler Christy (1872-1952), *Gee!! I Wish I Were a Man. I'd Join the Navy, Naval Reserve or Coast Guard,* 1918. Original poster, 41 x 27 in.





Cushman Parker (1881-1940), *Little Americans: Do Your Bit,* 1917, for United States Food Administration posters, 1918-1919. Oil on canvas, 18 x 18 in., signed lower right

called simply "World War I." But one aspect of America's involvement in the Great War that often doesn't make the history books involves the Committee on Public Information, a benign-sounding government body that had one job: to use every medium available to it to drum up support for the war and later help fund it through war bonds. The artists who would eventually participate with the committee and the war efforts are regarded today as master illustrators of the period: Charles Dana Gibson, W.H.D. Koerner, Howard Chandler Christy, Norman Rockwell, James Montgomery Flagg, J.C. Leyendecker and many others.

Their works related to the war are now on view in *American Illustration and the First World War* at the National Museum of American Illustration in Newport, Rhode Island. Judy Goffman Cutler, director and co-founder of the museum, says the works created by the Committee on Public Information were meant to shift public opinion about the war, and also to inspire patriotism for American efforts overseas.

"At the time, fine artists were painting beautiful landscapes, impressionists were copying Europeans and doing their own thing here in America, there were avant-garde artists...all of it was very peaceful and wonderful, but there was no real purpose for it. These illustrators had a purpose. They wanted to send a message," Cutler says. "It was the strength of their illustration that powered public sentiment and propelled us through the war."

The exhibition focuses mostly on the works created from a group within the Committee on Public Information, the Division of Pictorial Publicity, which was responsible for posters, cards and cartoons related to the war. Many of these works asked Americans who couldn't fight to do their part. A work by Edith Emerson asks viewers to "Sew for Our Soldiers" by mending soldiers' clothes. Another by Cushman Parker implores children to "Do your bit: Eat oatmeal—corn meal mush—hominy—other corn cereals—and rice with milk. Save the wheat for our soldiers. Leave nothing on your plate." Other works are recruitment posters for military-age men (and only men). In two posters by Christy, women are shown in military uniform imploring men to sign up. One reads: "Gee!! I wish I were a man—I'd join the Navy."

"Women were used as this ideal, this wonderful value that we were fighting for. Women, of course, were at home. They were allowed in the service as Yeomanettes in limited roles, mostly nurses, teachers or Red Cross workers. They were painted inspirationally, like Greek goddesses," Cutler says. "They were emotional paintings and women inspired that emotion, whether it was to love, to nurture or for sympathy."

American Illustration and the First World War will also features an original poster of what is arguably the most famous war illustration ever made: Flagg's *I Want You* poster featuring Uncle Sam jabbing his finger emphatically at the viewer. Flagg did not invent Uncle

Sam, but his depiction of the patriotic figure—using his own face as a model, albeit aged considerably—set the standard for more than a century.

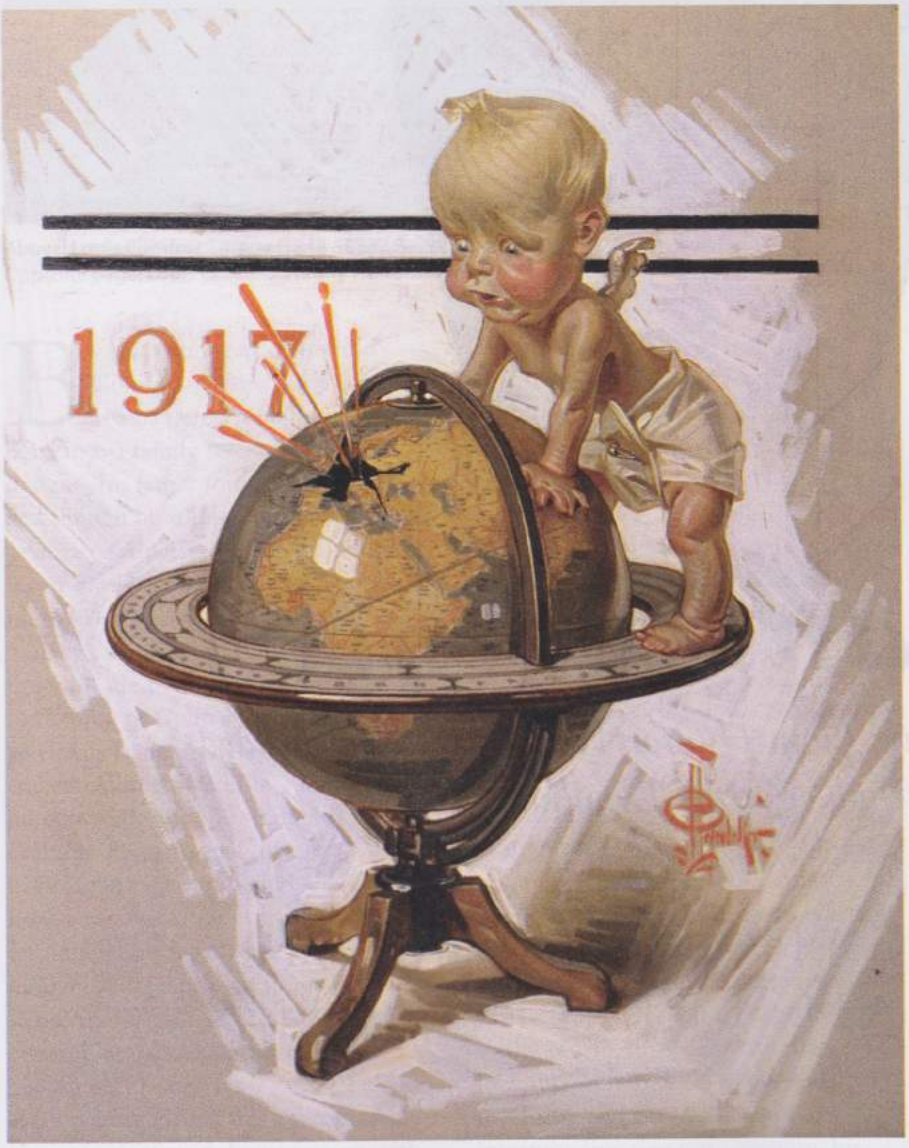
In addition to a variety of works that focus on war bonds—Franklin Booth's fiery orange *How Much Will You Lend to the Boys Who Are Giving All* is a noteworthy example—many of the works in the exhibition are also posters meant to sway public opinion, from grand ideas about the war ("Together We Win" and "Partners for Victory") all the way down to hyper-specific policy issues, such as Flagg's poster encouraging aid to China ("China is Helping Us!"). Today some of these works might fall into the category of propaganda, but Cutler resists the term. "Propaganda took on such a negative connotation. It is so powerful at shaping ideas," she says, adding that these World War I images were less about spreading false information, and more about getting people involved in something the country was deeply committed to overseas.

In addition to advocating for certain kinds of behaviors or donations, many of the images were meant to invoke patriotism. Frank Godwin's *Philadelphia Patriotic Scene* is a perfect example of this, with its flag-waving Boy Scouts and other children arranged in a layered composition in front of some of Philadelphia's most patriotic buildings and monuments. The fluttering flag consumes a third of the painting, and its reds and blues light up the canvas. Gerrit A. Beneker's *Partners for Victory* shares some qualities, mostly its vivid color, as three figures—Lady Liberty, a blue-collar worker and a soldier—gaze into brilliant sunlight.

Rockwell's *Till the Boys Come Home*, which was the cover of a 1916 issue of *Life* magazine, strikes a more mournful tone as the iconic illustrator paints women on a beach agonizingly waiting for their soldiers to come home. Anxiousness and despair fill their eyes as they watch the ocean for returning ships. "They look so sad. In one case, the girl looks sort of lost, but I think of them as hopeful. It was still a time when they weren't sure if the soldiers would return or not. They sent letters, and the guys wrote back, but no one was sure what was really happening, a point Rockwell makes clear with the censored letters at their feet," Cutler says, adding that the museum will have the original Rockwell painting and the *Life* issue it appeared on in the exhibition.

Other works include Leyendecker's *Europe at War – New Year's Baby 1917*, a *Saturday Evening Post* cover showing his iconic baby figure reacting to a globe that seems to be exploding outward from France, and Norman Price's *Bagged in France*, a work later used for Hercules Sporting Powders that shows a father opening a crate filled with war items sent from his son fighting overseas.

One thing that is absent from many of the works: violence, gore and death. "These are romantic works in a way. People didn't want to look at war," Cutler says. "War is ugly, but the artists found a way to present it to the American public in a way that encouraged them to get involved." ■



J.C. Leyendecker (1874-1951), *Europe at War – New Year's Baby 1917*, 1916, for *The Saturday Evening Post* cover, December 30, 1916. Oil on canvas, 24 x 18½ in., signed lower right.

Through December 28
American Illustration and the First World War
National Museum of American Illustration
492 Bellevue Avenue
Newport, RI 02840
t: (401) 851-8949
www.americanillustration.org