For Immediate Release: June 2018

Image from Tacoma Tribune Industrial Edition, February 12, 1918

WHAT: Tacoma Historical Society will open its newest exhibit, “Tacoma in 1918”

WHEN: Free Exhibit Opening Reception: Thursday, June 28, 2018, 5 to 7 pm

WHERE: Tacoma Historical Society Museum, 919 Pacific Avenue in the historic Provident Building

DURATION: The exhibit will be continue through December 1, 2018

HOURS: 11 am to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday

COST: Exhibit and museum admission is free, sponsored by a 2018 City of Tacoma Heritage Project Grant

Curator and Designer: Chris Fiala Erlich

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Kim Davenport, director@tacomahistory.org
Development of this exhibit began with the realization that several Tacoma organizations would be celebrating their centennial anniversaries in 2018 – the Port of Tacoma, the Pantages and Rialto Theaters, and the *Tacoma News Tribune*. As researchers dug into century-old newspapers and directories the list kept growing – Tacoma Little Theater, Tacoma Kiwanis, VFW Wild West Post #91, Tacoma Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 31, and more. 1918 brought the buildup of what was then Camp Lewis, and saw Tacoma grow to become the center of shipbuilding in the Northwest. Wartime patriotic fervor was evident in music, local Red Cross activities and sales of Liberty Bonds. And finally, the entire nation celebrated the Armistice.

The events of 1918 left a legacy that echoes down to life in Tacoma and Pierce County a century later. The location of the smelter stack that started operating in 1918 is now the site of the Point Ruston development. We still have a thriving port, nearby military installations, and an incredible pair of historic downtown theaters.

The exhibit will include some items loaned from community members – WWI journals, vintage sheet music, and selections from Alice Miller’s noted uniform collection. American Legion “Doughboy” Post #138 contributed military items including a bayonet and a gas mask. Brendan Balaam, Tacoma Historical Society curator, noted that “We are also able to highlight artifacts from our collection, including personal correspondence from a diverse group of soldiers.”

Noah Ahlstrom, a research fellow whose work contributed to the exhibit, says “I am impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of Americans of the era: defiant in the face of world war and invested with a new vitality despite hardship of theretofore unimaginable magnitude. Olive McCabe exemplifies the heroic efforts of the day. As a chief crisis coordinator for the Tacoma chapter of the American Red Cross, Ms. McCabe assuaged family members desperate for information on the health of their beloved service men under quarantine at Camp Lewis amid the Influenza pandemic of 1918. She and her compatriots comforted a deluge of wives, mothers and families with solace for body and soul thereby proving that the home front is as often a place of equal turmoil in wartime, and the end of the war is merely the beginning of a new conflagration.” Noah Ahlstrom is a fellow with the Veteran’s charity The Mission Continues. Upon completion of his fellowship in July of 2018 he plans on continuing to serve with Tacoma Historical Society as a volunteer.

The five-month exhibit is one phase of a larger project funded by a 2018 City of Tacoma Heritage Project grant. The second phase includes an active community outreach campaign, taking Society volunteers out in the community to street fairs and festivals as part of a membership drive, inspired by the WWI Liberty Bond campaigns. Join Tacoma Historical Society and ring the bell!

A highlight of the fall program schedule will be the Society’s annual Destiny Dinner on October 20th. Sponsored by the Port of Tacoma, Broadway Center for the Performing Arts, and Point Ruston, the dinner will be held at the historic Tacoma Armory. Exhibit outreach activities will conclude with a centennial Armistice observance at Tacoma’s War Memorial Park.
Did You Know?

- In the spring of 1918 Frank S. Baker bought the News and the Ledger from S.A. Perkins. Already the owner of the Tribune, Baker published the first issue of the Tacoma News Tribune in June of 1918.
- The first US air mail service was initiated in 1918, resulting in six new postage stamps, spurring the formation of stamp collecting clubs nationwide.
- In 1918 there were nearly 200 automobile companies in the United States, but more than half of the cars on the road were made by the Ford Motor Company.
- The most popular font introduced in 1918 was New Century Schoolbook, a variation of the 1917 Century Schoolbook font.
- George M. Cohan’s song Over There was printed in over two million copies of sheet music.

Tentative Schedule of Exhibit Programs and Events
(Follow our social media for updates and additions)

Thursday, June 28, 5 to 7 pm: Exhibit Opening Reception
Tacoma Historical Society Museum, 919 Pacific Avenue

Saturday, June 30 at 11:30 am: Lincoln Statue and Tacoma’s Lincoln District book signing
Lincoln High School, 701 South 37th Street

Saturday July 7: Alice Miller’s uniforms and stories
Tacoma Historical Society Museum, 919 Pacific Avenue

Sunday, July 15 from 2 to 4 pm: Greg Simmons/Vintage Music in South Proctor
Hidden Treasures Antiques, 3902 South 12th, corner of Proctor Street

Saturday, August 11 at 2 pm: Calvary Cemetery, grave of flu victim Father Hylebos
Calvary Cemetery, 5212 70th St W (Enter from Lakewood Drive)

Monday, October 8 at 7 pm: Kim Davenport – Lincoln Statue
Murray Board Room, Wheelock Student Union, UPS

Saturday, October 20 at 5 pm: 12th Annual Destiny Dinner “1918: A Year of Destiny”
Tacoma Armory, 11th and Yakima Avenue

Sunday, November 11 at 11 am
Veterans Day Observance and Armistice Day Centennial
War Memorial Park, Sixth and MacArthur

Monday, November 12 at 7 pm: Nancy K. Bristow, author of American Pandemic
Murray Board Room, Wheelock Student Union, UPS

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Tacoma Historical Society is a community-supported volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) charitable, nonprofit corporation, and is dedicated to the preservation, promotion and presentation of the history of the City of Tacoma and its people. Tacoma Historical Society works to forge connections between past and present generations, fostering an appreciation of the past and a sense of place within our community’s history.

www.tacomahistory.org