

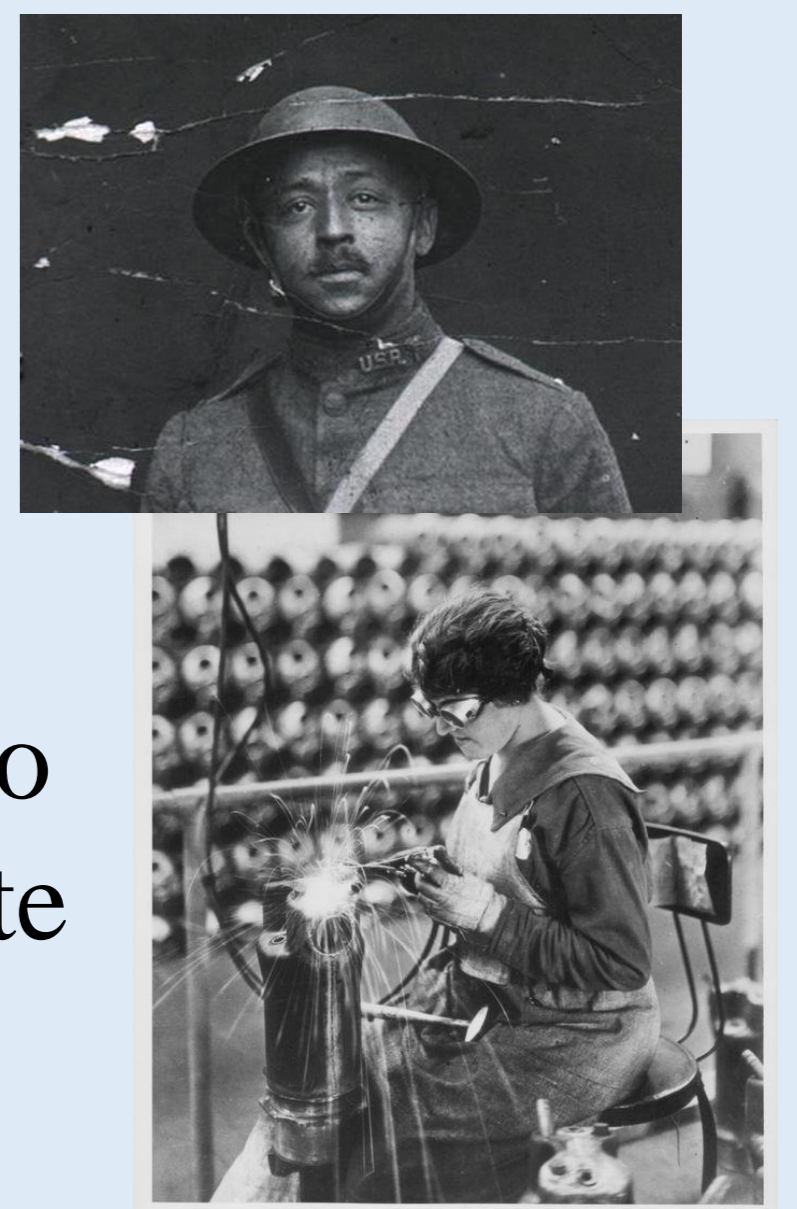
A Call to Remember: Documenting American Service and Sacrifice in the Great War

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Abstract: As the Armistice approached in 1918, there was growing political pressure to honor the fallen and to document each American state's mobilization efforts. Without a national archive to establish a centralized documentation strategy, a core group of state archivists founded the National Association of State War History Organizations (NASWHO). With the lack of a shared model, the organization represented a collective effort by the states to develop archival best practice to chronicle their wartime history.

Documenting the Great War

- **Wartime Response (1917-1918)** – With limited resources, individual states were charged to document all aspects of homefront mobilization, including participation of women, African Americans, and other underrepresented groups.
- **Postwar Response (1919-1923)** – American states appropriate funds to establish archival collections, write official histories, and commemorate the fallen. Due to rapid demobilization of the US military, states scramble to secure access to key federal government records.



Meeting a Civic Need

- In 1919, the NASWHO is formed as a national lobbying group and coordinating body.
- An office in Washington, DC is established, with a full-time researcher, to survey federal war records and to share a “library” of documents.
- Members meet at conferences to discuss best practices in arrangement and description, to share collecting models, and to develop professional networks.

Legacy: After meeting its stated goals, the NASWHO was disbanded in 1923. In its wake, a generation of archivists emerged as advocates for best practices in collecting and preserving government records, for the need of a national archives, and for the establishment of their own professional organization (Society of American Archivists). This wartime generation of archivists would help establish the National Archives in 1934, and would ultimately lead the effort to document the next world war.

