

The Yanks Are Coming

by Lynne Belluscio

I pulled the boxes of old sheet music out of the drawer of the cabinet in the back hall of LeRoy House. I knew that we had some World War I music and sure enough, there were about a dozen different songs. Some I had never heard of: "I'm Glad I Went Over to France," "I'm Glad I Can Make You Cry," and the old army camp song "Go On Mule." Several pieces at one time belonged to Sarah Bissell, who lived on West Main Street. She wrote her name and date on the sheet music. At the time of World War I, people would gather around the piano or parlor organ to sing the latest songs. The gramophone was rare and the radio wouldn't become in use in the home until the 1920s. Popular music during the World War might be heard as an occasional concert or musical program at the local opera house. Yet World War I was a time of popular music.

Music of the era, romanticized the gallant soldier and the girl he left back home. And there was the rally round the flag songs and the marching songs. Some of the songs poked fun at the food, or the conditions. The words from "I'm Glad I went over to France"

*I'm glad I'm here with the army
At last I've had my chance
To give 'em hell and show the Hun
I'm a roarin', fightin' son of a gun
Who never renigs when the fightin's hot
But plugs along through the shell and shot
I'm Glad, I'm glad, I'm glad
I came over to France*

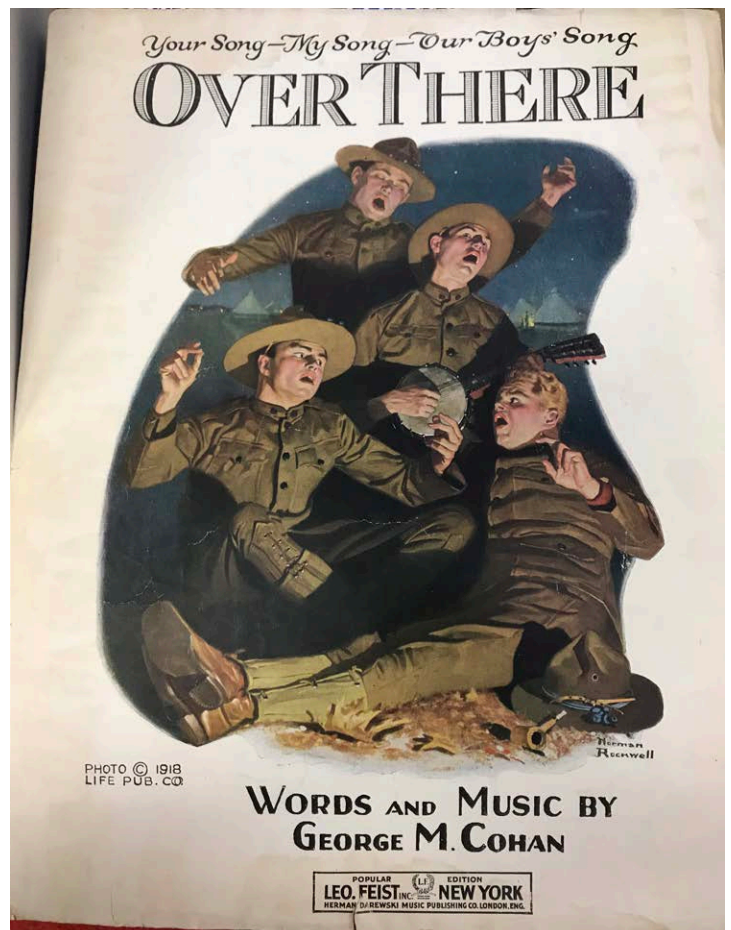
*I'm glad to be home with the army!
I want to sing and dance
I've had my share of army chow
And for me the home-cooked rations now.
Ice cream and pie till I've had by fill,
For this is the life, you bet, but still
I'm glad I'm glad, I'm glad I went over to France.*

One song, "We Don't Want the Bacon," has a great line: "We'll crown Bill the Kaiser with a bottle of Budweiser; We'll have a wonderful time!" One of the first and most popular American songs, "Over There," was written by George M. Cohen. I found a copy of "Over There" on Ebay with the cover illustrated by Norman Rockwell, which I added to the collection

*Johnnie get your gun, get your gun.
Take it on the run, on the run on the run.
Hear them calling you and me, Every son of liberty.
Hurry right a way, no delay, go today
Make your daddy glad to have had such a lad
Tell your sweetheart not to pine, To be proud her boy's in line.*

*Chorus:
Over there - -over there -
send the word over there,
That the Yanks are coming,
The Yanks are coming
The drums rum tum tumming every where.
So prepare. Say a prayer.
Send the word. Send the word to beware.
We'll be over. We're coming over,
And we won't come back 'til it's over, over there. .*

Other songs includ-



ed "It's A Long Long Way to Tipperary" which was written before the war in 1912. "Keep the Home Fires Burning" was written by Lena Guilbert Ford and the music by Ivor Novello. It was noted on the music that it had already been sung in six different languages.

*Keep the Home fires burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away,
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining,
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark clouds inside out,
Till the boys come home.*

As I was looking at the sheet music, I thought to myself, How come I know the music and words to a lot of these songs? They weren't played on the radio forty or fifty years after the war, and I don't remember

singing the songs in school or at Girl Scout Camp. And although I learned to play the piano when I was young, I wasn't playing this music. It still baffles me, why I know songs from World War I.

Another little book I found in the collection was a 1918 Army Song Book. It was issued by the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities and compiled with the assistance of the National Committee on Army and Navy Camp Music. It included the national anthems of Italy, Belgium, England and France - the Allies. I don't suspect that they issue a songbook to army recruits today.

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