

Greece History by Alan Mueller

“Calling Home” in The Great War, World War One

Incumbent President, **Woodrow Wilson**, barely won a second term over the Republican candidate, a former Governor of New York State and an associate Supreme Court Judge, **Charles Evan Hughes**. Wilson's propaganda re-election promise had been, "He kept us out of war". President Wilson was born and raised in Virginia and was aware of the devastation and poverty in the southern states following the Civil War. Events shortly after his second term drastically caused a turnaround in his thinking. Germany increased its war aggression in February 1917 when it announced that German U-boat Submarines would attack every ship in the waters around Europe, regardless of purpose, nationality, or destination. The war by that time had been waging in Europe since 1914. Within days Wilson ended diplomatic relations with Germany. The German emperor was informed in strong terms that Germany's action was not acceptable and risked confrontation. Following several other incidents, after the threat was ignored, the United States began clamoring for war. At the urging of President Wilson, Congress declared war on Germany April 6, 1917.

Registration and the drafting of young men followed. One hundred years ago, what was a fast way to communicate with a friend or relative who was in the military? With all our electronic devices and more added every few blinks of an eye, it's hard for us to realize communication in 1917: no overseas telephones, radio was just developing, but not for the masses. Overseas cable had long been in use, but was used for official business. The Penny-Postcard was the answer for a short message to or from a loved one or friend. Popularized in the early 1900s, they were popular all over the world. The card makers were quick to realize patriotic and sentimental cards would be in demand. We've gathered just a few to illustrate some of the thousands printed during a brief period of less than two years, 1917-1919.

The French printed card illustrates a "Doughboy" on the left and a French soldier on the right, while a French Red Cross Nurse is in the center, under the French and U.S. flags. The short message on the back, in pencil is very short: "To All at Home and friend Ann - Have been wounded am in a hospital now and will write later"... July 19 - Harry G., Co g - 38 inf. Passed by A.E.F. Another is a photo of seven American soldiers with a French Machine Gun. A special card with machine embroidered emblems of the Allies and a message to a soldier's mother. A very faint message, again in pencil, laments the fact that he missed his mom's birthday, but hopes he will home next year to celebrate it with her. The basic message 100 years ago or today still echoes the same: Hope all is well, we miss you, tell all hello, we can't wait to see you...our love. Even with today's instant communication, sometimes the darker side of devastating, horrific conflicts are not revealed by the person who experienced them until a much later time. The passing of one hundred years has not changed that....

