



PROJECT MUSE®

Lest We Forget: World War I and New Mexico by David V.
Holtby (review)

Richard Melzer

Journal of Arizona History, Volume 60, Number 2, Summer 2019, pp. 239-241
(Review)

Published by Arizona Historical Society



➔ For additional information about this article
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/737822>

sport, and modernity, and the history of the connection between gender and transcending traditionally Indigenous spaces in athletic competition. And when those texts are written, as is inevitable, those authors will owe a great deal to the insight and analysis of Professor Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert.

RHIANNON M. KOEHLER is a lecturer at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is the author of the article “Hostile Nations: Quantifying the Destruction of the Sullivan-Clinton Genocide of 1779” and is currently working on her first book.

Lest We Forget: World War I and New Mexico. By David V. Holtby. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. Pp. 346. \$32.95 cloth)

New Mexico is well known for its many contributions to the Allies’ victory in World War II. From journalist Ernie Pyle and cartoonist Bill Mauldin to the soldiers in the Bataan Death March and the scientists of the Manhattan Project, few other states sacrificed so much in so many ways. Now, with his appropriately titled book, *Lest We Forget*, David Holtby reminds us how much New Mexico contributed to the Allies’ success in World War I as well. His timing could not have been better as we celebrated the centennial of the Great War’s conclusion in 1918.

Holtby documents New Mexico’s role in the First World War with the use of sources uncovered in archives as far west as the Hoover Institution in Palo Alto, California, and as far east as the National Archives in Washington, D.C. But the author discovered his most valuable source in the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe. At the war’s end, the New Mexico Board of Historical Service, led by Edgar Lee Hewett, sent questionnaires to the veterans who had served in the war from New Mexico. Veterans returned over 1,500 of the questionnaires, creating a thorough record of the war, expressed in clear, candid, authentic voices.

In a well-balanced book, Holtby uses these sources to describe the progress and setbacks New Mexicans experienced at each stage of the war. While 60 percent of the fifteen thousand New Mexicans who served in the armed forces were Euro-Americans and 40 percent were *Nuevomexicanos*, only seventy American Indians and fifty African Americans from New Mexico were allowed to serve in the nation’s still-segregated armed forces. Most New Mexicans received their basic training at Camp Funston, Kansas, while Camp Cody in southern New Mexico trained thousands of men

from the Midwest but relatively few from New Mexico. Once in Europe, New Mexicans served in all twenty-nine combat divisions of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). Five hundred and two New Mexicans died in military service, but, as in most wars, more than half died of diseases or in accidents rather than in combat. A dozen New Mexicans, including three *Nuevomexicanos* and one American Indian, received the Distinguished Service Cross. Over a hundred New Mexicans served in Russia and Siberia in little-known campaigns in the aftermath of the war and the Bolshevik Revolution. Among the first to arrive in Europe, New Mexicans were among the last to leave, in September 1919.

Lest We Forget is equally balanced in its description of the home front in New Mexico. Governor Washington E. Lindsey established state and county Councils of Defense to help coordinate the state's war efforts. New Mexico organized one of the first women's auxiliaries in the country. With a severe shortage of farm labor, as many as five hundred women helped harvest crops on New Mexico farms. Individuals and whole groups bought far beyond their quota of war bonds, while contributing generously to the Red Cross. Civilians listened to four-minute men make short appeals for the support of various war-related issues and campaigns. As "sentinels of the kitchen," homemakers signed Hoover pledge cards, promising to follow government guidelines in voluntarily conserving and rationing precious food.

But all wars have their costs in lives, property, and the freedom of anyone fairly or unfairly identified with the enemy. In World War I, the latter included suspected German sympathizers and supposedly radical labor leaders. German sympathizers suffered extreme wartime intolerance. Even those who refused to purchase war bonds could face mob violence, as happened in 1918 when vigilantes tarred and feathered one man in Albuquerque and another in Carlsbad. Sadly, New Mexicans were hardly different from other Americans who often denied freedoms to dissidents in a war whose goal was to make the world safe for democracy and its guaranteed freedoms.

Just as New Mexicans fought in the last battles of the war in Europe, they faced a much smaller but far deadlier enemy at home and overseas. An influenza pandemic took the lives of over sixty-two million men, women, and children worldwide. Despite heroic, albeit sometimes misguided efforts to prevent the spread of the flu, the dreaded disease spread quickly, taking as many as five thousand lives in New Mexico, or many more times than the number of lives lost in the war itself.

The author would have us remember New Mexico's contributions to World War I for five specific reasons. First, New Mexicans perceived the conflict in very different ways. Civilian men and women, service

men and women, and, later, veterans, experienced “separate realities” given their separate points of reference. Second, Holtby would like us to remember that in the course of the war and its expected sacrifices, the federal government’s presence in New Mexico grew in unprecedented proportions. Next, by the time the war ended, New Mexicans had grown increasingly war weary and disillusioned with its high costs and seemingly paltry results. Fourth, Holtby considers the veterans’ interwar obscurity, especially during national crises like the Great Depression. Finally, Holtby contends that the First World War is not a settled conflict. Its repercussions have never ended, with its long fuse lit in 1918, detonated in World War II, and still ablaze in war zones, especially in the Middle East.

Providing a detailed narrative and admirably addressing these five main themes, David Holtby has given us a well-written, near-definitive history of New Mexico’s role in the Great War. Holtby has filled a largely neglected void in New Mexico history, ably picking up the state’s history where he had left off with his award-winning *Forty-Seventh Star: New Mexico’s Struggle for Statehood* (2012).

RICHARD MELZER is the Regents Professor of History at the University of New Mexico–Valencia Campus.

They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation during the Great Depression. By Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso. Translated by Russ Davidson. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. 272. \$90.00 hardcover; \$29.95 paper; \$19.95 ebook)

Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso has long been the Mexican migration historian most widely cited by U.S.–based scholars of early-twentieth-century Mexican American history. Nonetheless, the fact that his oeuvre of more than fifteen books and twenty articles is written in Spanish has limited its potential to fully inform these fields or attract interest beyond them. Now, thanks to editor Mark Overmyer-Velázquez and the “Latin America in Translation” series of Duke University and the University of North Carolina presses, at least one of Alanís Enciso’s books can be widely read in the English-speaking world. *They Should Stay There*, which hones in on Mexican government policies toward emigrants in the final years of the Great Depression, will certainly interest the scholars of Mexican American history who ideally were reading him all along. It should also draw attention from historians of U.S. labor and immigration more generally, as well as political sci-