

Way We Were

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If you can't enlist, invest!

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When the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, thus entering the already years-old global conflict of World War I, the country needed a way to pay for its involvement. The answer was the "Liberty Bond," a loan from the American people to the government.

Loans were sold to the populace in a series of batches. The first two Liberty Bonds, though reportedly sold out, received only a lukewarm response. This marginal success was sometimes blamed on German sabotage or bond traders and firms who sold loans accused of "pro-German sympathies." Such accusations were almost always unfounded.

For the third Liberty Loan, Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo promoted an aggressive campaign to popularize the bonds. Propaganda posters rolled off the presses at high speed, invoking German atrocities to influence public participation. Bold images depicting anything from a monstrous-looking "Hun" soldier with a bloody knife to a mother with children holding out her arm in supplication, implored Americans to buy bonds "That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth." One poster portrayed immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, with the Statue of Liberty clear in the background, and called upon residents to "Remember Your First Thrill of American Liberty."

Movie stars like Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford held rallies to promote Liberty Bonds; local scout troops banded together under the slogan, "Every Scout to Save a Soldier"; and pilots from the U.S. Army Signal Corps flew their "Jenny" aircraft across the country, staging mock aerial battles, performing stunts and offering rides to anyone who purchased a bond.

In Park City, the "parade committee" organized a large rally to promote Liberty Bonds to Parkites and other Summit County residents. A huge parade of "automobiles, flambeau carriers, and Liberty Loan boosters," marched along Main Street as "red fire...burned all along the line of the march and novel features given that will attract and enthuse." These "novel features" included dynamite salutes "fired with frequency and 'vociferousness.'"

A rally held at the Orpheum Theatre featured the Reverend Bishop Glass of Salt Lake, music, and "other entertainment." Businesses throughout town had "handsome and unique displays in their show windows." The idea was "to show what poverty would result if America lost in the great world battle because of possible lack of patriotism in not subscribing for Liberty Bonds, and the prosperity that would sooner or later result if the Liberty loan was over-subscribed."

The local drive was successful and Parkites congratulated themselves heartily. "No city in [the] United States excels Park City in loyalty and patriotism," the *Park Record* declared. Summit County subscribed to \$300,000 of Liberty Bonds, equivalent to over \$5 million in today's dollars.

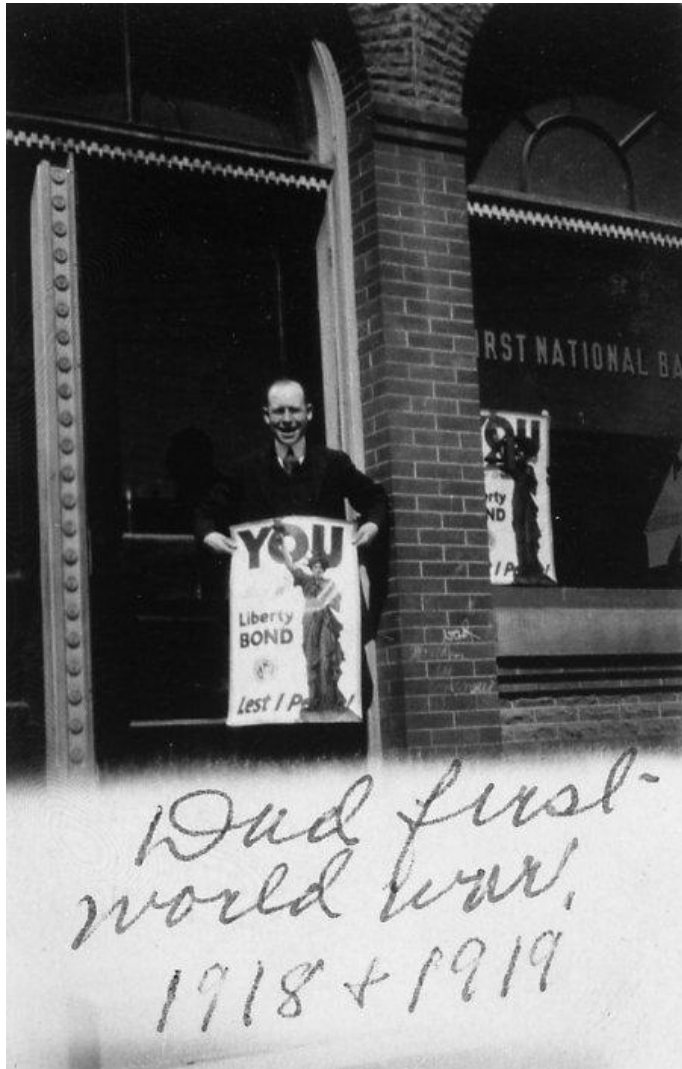


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Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Leland Jerome Paxton Collection

Caption: Parkites could buy their Liberty Bonds locally at the First National Bank, where bankers like Jerome Francis Paxton, pictured, explained the interest rates, terms, tax benefits, and other details of the loans.