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EXPOSITION

06.02 - 31.05.2024

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# Americans in Flanders Fields. Names & Places.

**A temporary exhibition at the In Flanders Fields Museum**

**6 February 2024 to 31 May 2024**

The participation of the United States was a turning point in the course of the First World War. In a new thematic exhibition, In Flanders Fields Museum highlights the presence of Americans in Belgium during the First World War, before and after the official US participation in the war. The Expo is part of the permanent exhibition. Americans in Flanders Fields is the result of a partnership between the In Flanders Fields Museum, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, USA) and the United States Embassy in Belgium.

“In today's commemorative landscape, American relics or memorials are less visible. Thanks to its collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Belgium and the Smithsonian Institution, the In Flanders Fields Museum sheds light on the American presence during the First World War.”

~ Stephen Lodewyck, director In Flanders Fields Museum.

“Whoever you are, wherever you are, you are living in a world that has been shaped and defined by the First World War. Especially at this historic moment, it is important that we continue to educate current and future generations about the horrific struggle that took place on Belgian soil.

I would like to thank the entire team of the In Flanders Fields Museum for their hard work and ongoing commitment to ensure the legacy of all those touched by this war lives on. Their stories serve as a constant reminder of the high price of freedom.”

~ Michael M. Adler, U.S. Ambassador in Belgium

"Americans in Flanders Fields can be seen as an extension of your museum visit. You will also be able to admire a Flemish masterpiece: a decorated flour sack. The flour sack symbolizes the large international food aid that Belgium received during the First World War."

~ Dimitry Soenen, president AGB Musea

[Here](#) you can find the digital press kit with photo's and video's.

As a member of the press, you are always welcome to visit the exhibition. Make an appointment and we can provide you with additional content for your publication.

**historical questions** *Americans in Flanders Fields*

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Vlaanderen  
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## Flemish masterpiece, creative design

As a visitor, you literally step into the Expo and discover all facets of the American presence in Belgium during the First World War. The design hints at the *stars and stripes* of the United States of America. In addition to text, video and photography, objects are also on display.

One of the eye-catchers is a decorated flour sack. When the War broke out, there was much sympathy for 'poor little Belgium'. This led to all sorts of initiatives in America to help the Belgian civilians. Hundreds of tonnes of flour, packed in cotton sacks, were shipped to Belgium. In turn, the empty flour sacks were decorated in Belgium and sent back to America. These flour sacks symbolize the great international food aid that Belgium received. The flour sacks were recognized as a masterpiece by the Flemish government.



*The Commission for Relief in Belgium* shipped hundreds of tonnes of flour to Belgium, packed in cotton sacks. As the cotton could also serve in the German war industry, its distribution was strictly controlled by the Commission. Preferably, they delivered the empty sacks to schools, sewing workshops, monasteries and artists to have them processed. Not infrequently, the flour sacks transformed into works of art found their way back to the United States as tokens of gratitude to benefactors or to be sold there at fundraising events.



## Belgians in the US army

After the declaration of war on Germany in April 1917, the US army was organised, trained and sent to Europe. The arrival of the Americans tipped the balance in favour of the Allies. During the summer and autumn of 1918, four US divisions also fought on the front in Flanders. These included some "Belgians" who fought and/or died in American uniform. These were men who migrated to the United States before the war and ended up back in Europe because of the war. In Flanders Fields Museum also tells the story of some of them.

A remarkable story is that of the Van den Broeck family from Sint-Niklaas. Of the nine children in clogmaker Jan's family, five boys and two girls emigrated to the US before the war. When war broke out, the two sons still residing in Belgium, Leon and Frans, enlisted in the Belgian army. Emiel and Joseph returned from the US to join the Belgian ranks. And Henri, Charles, August and sister Henriette joined the US army after April 1917. All eight survived the war.



## New findings, new publication, new application

Thanks to years of work on [the List of Names](#), the Expo will be the first to provide new information on the number of fallen Americans, their origins, repatriation, and their memorial sites. The exhibition is accompanied by a publication that includes all the results of the historical research. The Names List essay "Americans in Flanders Fields" will be presented on Thursday, March 28, at 7 pm in the Museum Café of the In Flanders Fields Museum. Please register via the website.

A new app focusing on the American presence will be launched this spring. With this app you can discover American traces in the landscape. The other applications can be found on the [In Flanders Fields Museum website](#).



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