

Heroism and Humanity Behind the Lines of WWI

**With a
Colorado
Connection**



**Jeff Miller Presentation
Centennial Rotary Club
June 25, 2019**



National Public Radio Building Washington, DC



(Accepts no spontaneous walk ins!)



The Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB)



Saved Lives Versus Taking Lives

A Few CRB Stats

- More than 5 million tons of material shipped and distributed.
- Nearly 1 billion 1914 US dollars (nearly \$26 billion in 2019 dollars)
- Every day about 50 ships from around the world headed for the neutral port of Rotterdam, where the food was transferred to 500 canal barges and pulled into Belgium.
- 40,000 Belgian volunteers prepared and distributed the food.

A Great Organizer Appears



Setting the Scene: Belgium, WWI, and the CRB



Pre-war Belgium

- 7.5 million residents; smaller than Maryland
- Most industrialized country in Europe
- Highest density: 652 people per sq. mile
 374, U.K. 310, Germany
 189, France 31, America
- Imported more than 75% of its daily food

German Occupation Begins

- No cars, buses, trains
- No telephones or telegrams
- No mail, no newspapers, no communications
with the outside world
- No travel beyond your neighborhood or village

**Basically,
A Return to Medieval Times**

The Food Situation

- Germans refuse to feed the Belgians
- British blockade German territories
- Industrial Belgium shut down
- Most crops lost
- Breadlines form



U.S. Minister to Belgium

“We began to note a new phenomenon, new at least to Brussels—women begging in the streets. Hunger, another of war’s companions, had come to town.”



Brand Whitlock

Elsewhere – August, 1914

- It's the peak of the European tourist season
- 100,000+ U.S. tourists visiting European countries are caught in the turmoil
- Transportation, communications, and banking systems are in chaos
- Most transatlantic services are suspended
- Spontaneous relief efforts spring up to help the American tourists.

A Great Humanitarian



Herbert C. Hoover

- * 40 years old, living in London
- * **Multimillionaire mining engineer**
- * Wants to serve the public
- * **Offers his services to help U.S. stranded tourists**

The Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB)

The CRB had to try and:

- Organize worldwide donations and funding
- Buy food around the world
- Ship it to Rotterdam, Holland, where it would be put in canal barges and brought into Belgium, where the Belgian Comite Nationale (CN) would distribute the food
- Guarantee the Germans would not take the food
- Get all the governments to agree to the plan

An Obvious Problem Arose

- The English did not trust the Germans.
- They demanded neutral observers, or delegates, be in Belgium to make sure the Germans did not take the food.

Hoover's Delegate Dilemma



Where could he find U.S. volunteers ready to:

- * Drop Everything
- * Work for Free
- * Go into German occupied Belgium
- * Do a job that no one could explain in detail
- * For an extended period of time

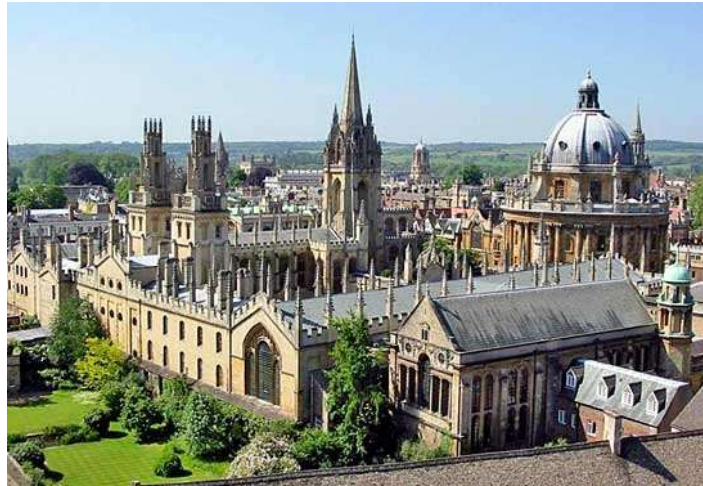
Serendipity – 1914



Edward Eyre Hunt, or E.E. Hunt

- 29 years old
- Harvard grad
- Editorial staff of *American Magazine* in NYC
- Freelance war correspondent
- Survived the fall of Antwerp and walked with refugees into Holland
- Heard about the CRB from the American Embassy staff in Holland and joined the CRB as a delegate in December 1914.

Oxford University



Carlton G. Bowden



Scott H. Paradise



Perrin C. Galpin

“We had visions of sitting on top of box cars or sleeping on the decks of small canal barges in their long journeys from Rotterdam into Belgium . . . We expected to see German savages prowling around ready at the slightest provocation to scalp women and children and perhaps provoke a quarrel with us for the same purpose!”



Erica Bunge

Do you know the PBS show Downton Abbey?

**The Three
TV Sisters**



**The Three
Bunge Sisters**



Downton Abbey

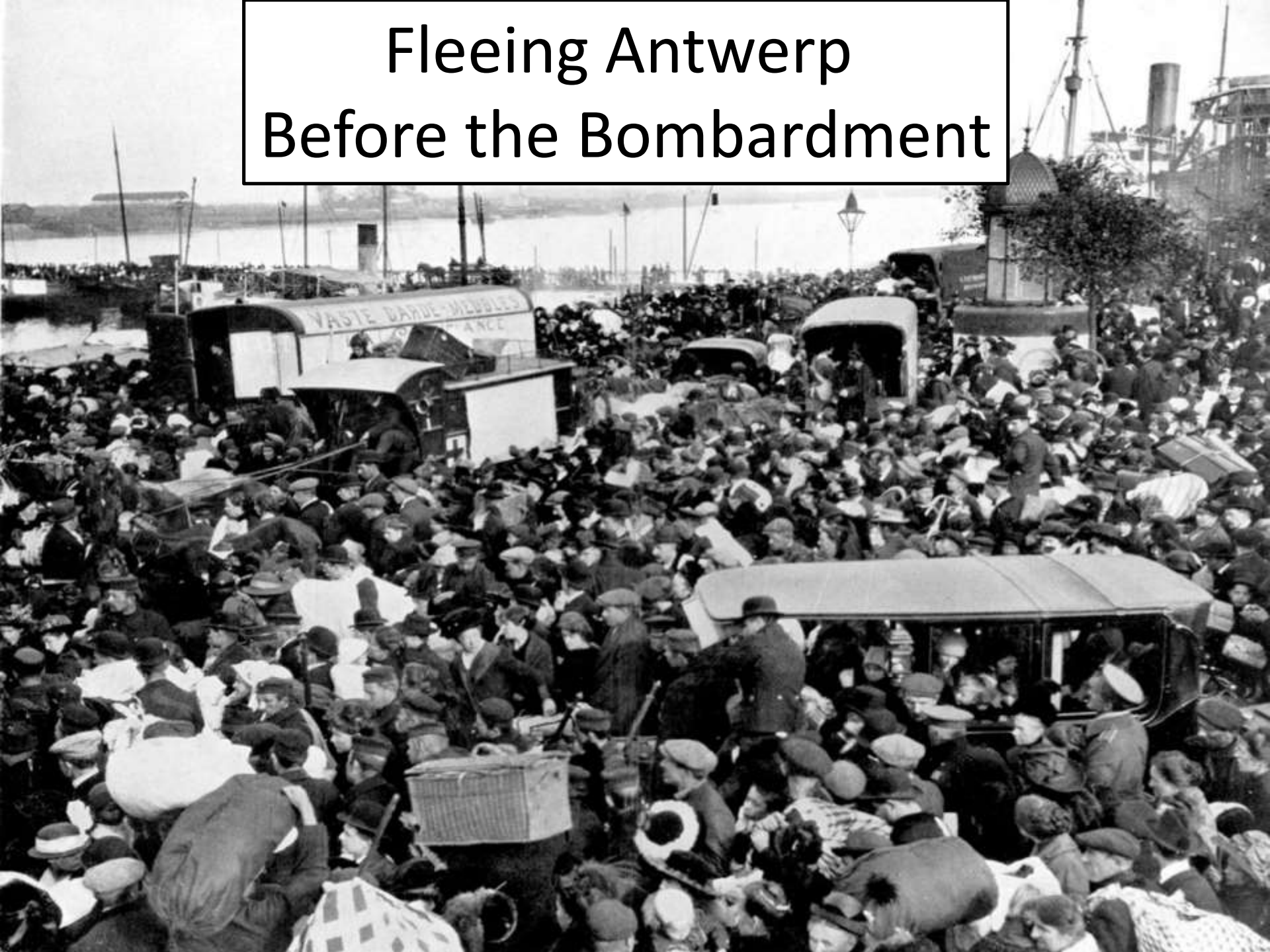


Chateau Oude Gracht

Erica Bunge as a Nurse in 1914



Fleeing Antwerp Before the Bombardment



Edouard Bunge's contribution to Belgian relief



- Served as V-P of the Antwerp Provincial Committee
- **Sat on the board of the Comite National**
- Provided Individual relief through his own private contributions
- **Aided the CRB directly by:**
 - Provided his townhouse as a home for CRB delegates
 - **Provided CRB office space in his downtown bank building**
 - Opened Chateau Oude Gracht to all CRB members

Erica Bunge's Relief Efforts

- Volunteered at an Antwerp hospital
- **Volunteered at an Antwerp soup kitchen**
- Joined Les Petites Abeilles, the Little Bees, and worked in one of the children's canteens

Established and Supervised a Dairy Farm

- * **Convinced the Germans to allow the purchase and importation of 100 dairy cows from Holland**
- * Supervised the construction of the dairy farm facilities on their estate
- * **Organized the daily shipments of milk to Antwerp**

Maurice Pate



- Raised in Denver
- Lived at 2053 Clermont in South Park Hill
- Oldest of seven children
- Three of his siblings had died in infancy
- Attended East High School

1911 East High School Yearbook



WOODFORD OVERMEYER.

*"His grammar's not always correct, nor his rhyme;
And he's prone to repeat his own lyrics sometimes."*

Cadets, '10, '11; Congress, '10, '11.

MAURICE PATE.

"A man not of words but of action."

Woodbury Contest, '07; Congress, '11; Senior Class Play, '11; Annual Board, Advertising Manager, '11; Commencement Essay, '11.



HELEN PARKES.

"Modesty is a candle to thy merit."



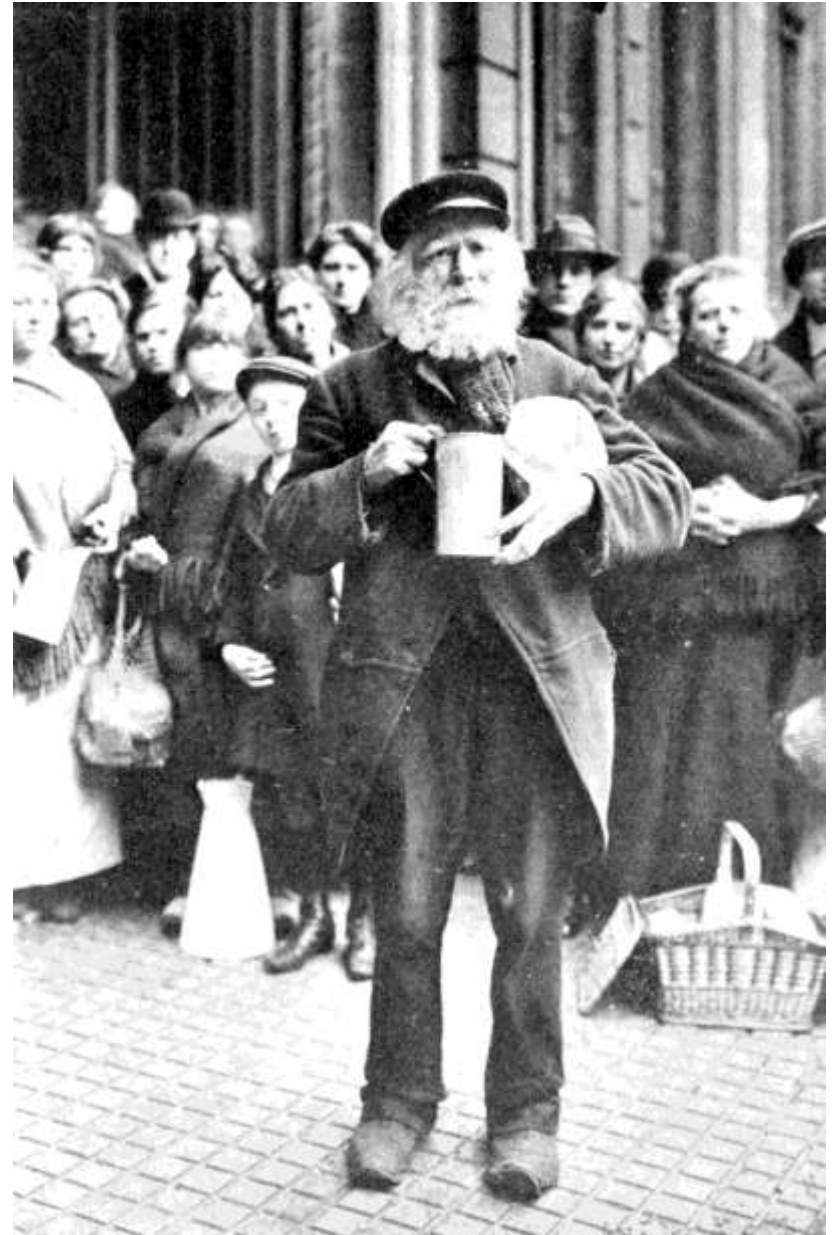


German-Occupied Belgium

War's Destruction



Breadlines & Hunger



Feeding the Destitute



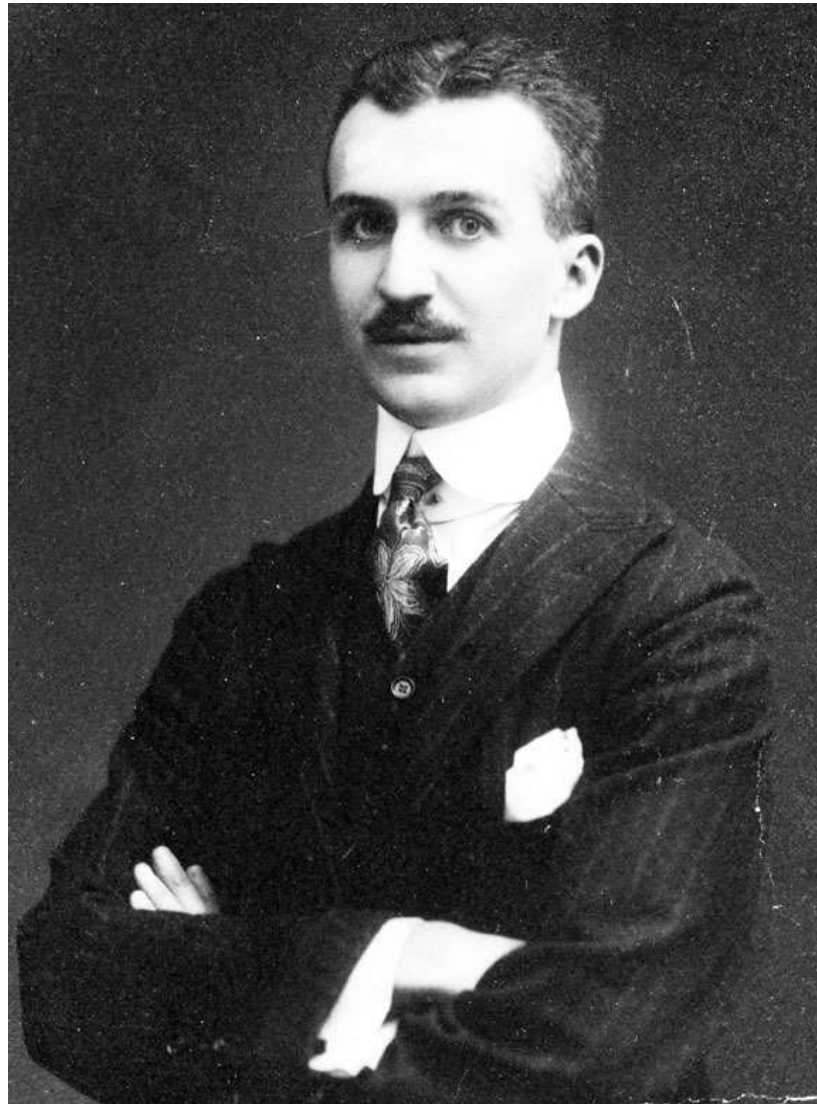
Belgium's Children



Founder and Director of UNICEF



Milton M. Brown



My Grandparents

1919



1970s

WWI CRUSADERS



A band of Yanks in German-occupied Belgium
help save millions from starvation as civilians
resist the harsh German rule.

August 1914 to May 1917.

Jeffrey B. Miller

A Quote from *WWI Crusaders*

“Most of the CRB delegate stories have been long forgotten, innocent victims swept away by the tidal wave of negative public opinion surrounding Hoover’s later efforts as president. Because Hoover is perceived as having been a bad president, much of his great humanitarian work and the work of those associated with the relief have been neglected.

Their stories deserve to be told and remembered.”