

ARTISTS AT WAR

SOME OF THE US NAVY'S MOST DRAMATIC ARTWORK WAS CREATED DURING THE GREAT WAR. ART DEPICTED NOT ONLY NAVAL BATTLES BUT ALSO PATRIOTIC SCENES UTILIZED FOR RECRUITING POSTERS. THIS MONTH, WE EXAMINE JUST A FRACTION OF THE ART CREATED DEPICTING THE "WAR TO END ALL WARS"

BY ROD ELMSDORF

ART WORK COURTESY NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Spirit of 1917 is an oil on canvas painting by Leon Alaric Shafer. This popular image was used on recruiting posters for the Great War. Shafer's painting tries to bring to viewers' minds the then-recent successes enjoyed by the US Marine Corps in Caribbean actions. Its title and composition are reminiscent of the famous painting *Spirit of 76* by Archibald Willard, which was very popular at the time. Both paintings were intended to engender a spirit of patriotism and determination in viewers. In this one, a color guard leads Marines into action across tropical beaches — proud, well-equipped, and ready for action.



Created by Edmund Sears Sayer, this dramatic oil on canvas painting is titled *Sinking of President Lincoln 1918*. The art depicts the ocean liner *President Lincoln*, which was operated by Germany's Hamburg Line. With America's entry into the Great War, the ship was seized during 1917 in New York Harbor. She was converted into a troop transport by the US Shipping Board but retained the same name. She had completed her fifth voyage delivering men and supplies to France when she became a target on her return voyage some 600 miles from France. The captain of U-90 fired three torpedoes into the ship, which began to sink by the stern as crew and passengers took to lifeboats. Of the 715 onboard, 26 were killed. Lieutenant Edouard Izac was taken prisoner by the submarine, whose commander mistakenly thought he was the captain of the liner.