

★ NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

McClintic Collection: An Oklahoma Congressman's Adventure in Europe

*By Michael Bell**

A part of my job that gets really interesting is when I am looking in artifact collections for objects that list “unknown location” in the records and I find one. Sometimes it is simply a case of the object being moved and no one updating the location record. As staff members, we spend time searching through records and boxes until the object is found and the record is updated. Other times we find an object with no information to identify who donated it or to what collection it belongs. After searching through the records trying to identify the object, we might then accession it as a “Found in Collections” piece and put a number on the object so it can be tracked.

Occasionally an object will be mistakenly added to a collection from a different donor. One such object recently was found, and turned out to be a medallion donated to the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1934 by James V. McClintic, a congressman who represented southwest Oklahoma's Seventh District in the US Congress. McClintic served ten terms in Congress before losing the election of 1934. When he left office, McClintic donated a group of bronze medallions he collected in 1919 while in Europe after the end of World War I. He also donated a pass to travel to Berlin issued to him by the German Army and a copy of a speech he gave on the floor of the US House of Representatives in December 1919, both of which are now in the OHS Manuscript Archives.

The seven medallions were part of a series produced during the war by Karl Goetz, a well-known German artist. Goetz produced the medallions to be morale boosters and celebrations of German victories



Lusitania medallion donated by Congressman McClintic.

during the war. One in particular became notorious for celebrating the sinking of the luxury liner RMS *Lusitania* in May 1915, a tragedy in which as many as 1,128 people drowned because the ship went down so quickly. The first version of the medallion had an incorrect date showing the sinking occurred on May 5, 1915. A German submarine actually torpedoed the ship on May 7. The British government used the mistake as a propaganda tool to show that the Germans had specifically targeted the ship for sinking. The British produced their own version of the medallion for distribution as evidence of German treachery. Goetz quickly made another version of the medallion with the correct date, but the damage had been done. McClintic donated the corrected version of the medallion to the OHS, dated May 7, 1915.

Another medallion depicts America's demand that Germany cease submarine warfare and Germany's response. One is a satire of America's war aims to help Britain. A fourth has France crowing about its

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Right: Medallion depicting the United States' opposition to submarine warfare.



Left: Medallion depicting the alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom.

Right: Medallion depicting France "crowing" about its allies.



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Left: Medallion depicting Woodrow Wilson.



Right: Medallion depicting Uncle Sam seated on a stack of cannonballs.



Left: Medallion depicting the German viper striking the Allies.

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*James McClintic (2012.201.
B0388.0067, Oklahoma Pub-
lishing Company Photography
Collection, OHS).*



allies in the war. The fifth is a bit more hopeful in that it describes President Wilson's Fourteen Points for peace. The sixth disparages America's claims of neutrality by showing Uncle Sam sitting on a stack of cannonballs and selling arms to Britain. The seventh proclaims that if America enters the war, the German viper will strike.

Congressman McClintic gave a speech on the floor of the US House wherein he told the story of his trip to Europe along with Louis B. Goodall, a Republican from Maine. The congressmen had traveled to Europe to determine what conditions were like after the war. During their trip the men visited Amerongen in the Netherlands. They wanted to see where Kaiser Wilhelm II had taken refuge after abdicating his throne to end the war. McClintic and Goodall never tried to enter the castle and only looked through the gate. However, afterward they were stopped and questioned several times by Dutch authorities wanting to know who they were and what they were doing. Once, in Nijmegen, they were arrested and questioned by police who thought they might have stolen the car they were driving. The men eventually were released to continue their trip to Germany. In Coblenz, McClintic

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Deutsche Militär-Kommission.
German Military Commission.

Coblenz, den 10. Juli, 1919.
Castorpfaffenstr. 21.

Abt. 5, Br. B. Nr. 987, 1919/E.

Bei Beantwortung bitte Datum
und Nr. dieses Briefes angeben.

Replying please quote Nr.
and date of this letter.

Fernsprecher 498 u. 3009.

Ausweis.

St.

Herr J. V. Mc CLINTIC, Mitglied des Kongresses
der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, hat die Erlaubnis
per Eisenbahn dienstlich nach Berlin zu fahren und zu-
rück nach Coblenz.



Alle Behörden werden gebeten ihm ungehindert
reisen zu lassen und ihm nötigenfalls Schutz und Hilfe
zu gewähren.-

Gültig vom 10. bis 20. Juli, 1919.



Kühenthal

KÜHLENTHAL.
Major im Generalstabe und Chef der
Deutschen Militär-Kommission.-

o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o

Certificate.

Valid from July 10th to 20th, 1919.

The HONORABLE J. V. MC CLINTIC, Member of the
Congress of the U. S. has permission to proceed by rail
to Berlin on official business, and will return
upon completion to Coblenz.-

All authorities and sentinals are requested to let
him pass unmolestedly, and in case of need to help and
assist him.-



Kühenthal

KÜHLENTHAL.
Major in the General Staff and Chief
of the German Military-Commission.-

THIS PASS MUST BE RETURNED TO OUR OFFICE UPON ITS EXPIRATION.
IF NOT RETURNED FURTHER PASSES INTO UNOCCUPIED GERMANY WILL NOT BE GRANTED.

Travel pass given to Congressman McClintic by the German Army (2013.044, Honorable James V. McClintic Collection, OHS).

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obtained a pass from the German Army authorizing him to travel to Berlin. When McClintic left the train in Berlin he was again detained by police, this time because he had not paid his train fare. German railroads used a different method of paying fare than that of American railroads. Once the congressman had paid he was released to continue his visit. He then described the chaos and dangers faced by the German people after the army was demobilized and before civil authority could regain control. While in Berlin, he acquired the medallions he later donated to the OHS. It is strange how such a small object can relate the story of an Oklahoman's adventure and participation in events on the world stage.

Endnotes

* Michael Bell is the curator of collections at the Oklahoma History Center.

¹ Carolyn G. Hanneman, "McClintic, James Vernon," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=MC010.

² Annette McDermott, "How the Sinking of *Lusitania* Changed World War I," History Channel, www.history.com/news/how-the-sinking-of-lusitania-changed-wwi.

³ Phil Dutton, "How a German Medallion Became a British Propaganda Tool," Imperial War Museum, www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-a-german-medallion-became-a-british-propaganda-tool.

⁴ James V. McClintic, folder 1, 2013.044, Honorable James V. McClintic Collection, Research Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; "Speech of Hon. James V. McClintic of Oklahoma in the House of Representatives, Dec. 8, 1919" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 3–11.

⁵ "Speech of Hon. James V. McClintic," 6.