Acknowledgments

The idea for this book emerged slowly as a result of two quite disparate experiences in 2001. First, a conference in Lyon, France, sponsored by the newly formed International Society for First World War Studies, challenged me to consider transnational experiences of war. Jenny Macleod and Pierre Purseigle made this conference a truly international event, for which I am most grateful. I returned from the conference on September 9, 2001, and had barely recovered from the flight when the second event occurred, the attacks of 9-11. Over the next two years, as war in Afghanistan and Iraq dominated U.S. headlines, these two experiences came together in the idea that became this book. I began to wonder where our contemporary notions of warfare and civilians had developed. Why were civilian contractors carrying out the work of war in Iraq, and why were so many Afghan and Iraqi people considered “collateral damage” in the conflict? How did volunteer armies on multiple tours of duty deal with the strain of war and how did they bridge the gap to their civilian lives? I decided to delve into these questions and others by examining the civilian experience in the First World War, which was a formative moment in the modern history of warfare.

While many of my fellow historians have questioned my sanity in taking on such a broad topic, I wanted a book that the undergraduates in my sophomore seminar could read—something that forced them to make connections and ask big questions. Given that intended audience, my first debt is to the students at Wittenberg University who have asked questions that sent me scurrying to the archives and libraries for answers. In particular, my gratitude goes to the two faculty aides who have helped
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