

Waldo Peirce World War One Biography



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2018 marks the centennial anniversary of America's involvement in World War One. The anniversary of one of the most horrific events in human history should not be a testament to human cruelty, but instead a celebration of the lives of those soldiers who everyday become increasingly more forgotten. On this anniversary we take the opportunity to remember those who served and pass on their stories in an attempt to ensure that those who sacrificed everything do not go un-remembered.

Waldo Peirce was born on December 17th 1884 in Bangor Maine, to parents Mellen and Anna Peirce. He was the younger of two having an older brother named Hayford who too would later also serve in WWI. Peirce's father was a lumber baron so from his early childhood Peirce was a stranger to financial troubles.. As Peirce grew his family would be in constant support of the arts as pursuits for both him and his brother. With the financial stability of his family Waldo Peirce would attend Phillips Academy in Andover



Massachusetts before following his brother to Harvard University. It was very clear in his early

life that between the two of them that Hayford was the more studious of the duo. Waldo Peirce was set to graduate from Harvard in 1907, however, his graduation was delayed for two more years and still he barely graduated, as Peirce preferred playing pool in different dorms over any academic pursuit. While at Harvard Peirce, who was often

described as a beast of a man, would play on the football team and later be approached by professional boxer John L. Sullivan, A.K.A.

“The Boston Strongboy, who tried to convince Peirce that his massive stature would suit him well in the ring. Peirce however paid no mind to Sullivan's suggestion as boxing didn't interest him much. Despite his best efforts Peirce graduated in 1909 and now had to decide what to do with his life. Peirce immediately decided



to live abroad and go to Tunisia Spain to study with Ignacio Zuloaga at the Academia Julian to hone his artistic craft. It was here that Waldo would expand upon his talent for painting which he discovered at Harvard. Peirce was all set to cross the Atlantic with his friend John Reed when an incident would occur. After the ship left port Peirce had seemingly gone missing. Reed was then



detained and held for the whole journey on the suspicion that he killed Waldo Peirce and that he threw his body overboard.

However when the ship arrived in England, they found Peirce already there waiting. Peirce reportedly found the quarters on the ship un-ideal and he jumped from the back of the ship, swam to shore, and boarded the faster and more comfortable Lusitania which would bring him quickly and comfortably across the

Atlantic. From there Peirce made his way to Spain where he would perfect his art and eventually meet his first wife Dorothy Rice, the daughter of a New York financier and a fellow student of Peirce. Peirce would later move to Paris with his wife and attempt to unsuccessfully join the French Military twice when war broke out in 1914.

In 1916, at the age of 31, after two failed attempts to join the French Military, Waldo Peirce volunteered for the American field service where he was tasked to drive an ambulance.



The section that was "shot up" at Verdun—American Ambulance Field Service, Section Three. Ralph Blumenthal, the Princeton All-America football centre, standing at the right. Next him, Waldo Peirce, the artist.

Hayford had also joined the fight before Waldo did, however he would serve on the frontlines rather than in a medical unit, unlike his younger brother. Waldo Peirce's job tasked him with driving into active battle zones, retrieving the wounded, and bringing them back to field hospitals where field nurses and war surgeons would attempt to save their

lives. Although Peirce did not fight on the frontliners he became very exposed to the horrors of industrial war. Peirce reportedly often came off as un-empathetic and cold, however his journals show the struggle he was going through, and the horrific sights of men with their limbs blown off, people choked by poisonous gas and men bleeding out in front



of him from irreversible damage, Waldo Peirce saw his fair share of violence, and it turned him very cold during the war. Despite his cold demeanor he still pursued art, finding free time to paint, and often using the side of his ambulance to do so. Peirce was not just a painter in a war either, he was a behemoth of a man, and exhibited great bravery and leadership in the war. So much so that at the battle of Verdun he was awarded the Croix de Guerre for his bravery in the fight. He remained in the war as an ambulance driver until its end in November of 1918.

After the war Peirce would follow the path of many an artist of the twenties and return to Paris and become one of the members of the so-called “Lost Generation”. Both Waldo and his



brother pursued art, Hayford became a writer and Waldo continued to pursue painting. While in Paris Waldo Peirce made some very valuable connections with other artists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, John Dos Passos, but most importantly Ernest Hemingway. Peirce and Hemingway

immediately became the best of friends and formed a friendship that would last for their lifetimes. The two would drink, and fish, and create art together.

They were basically inseparable while in Paris and each loved and supported the others art, so much so that when Ernest Hemingway was put on the cover of Time magazine on October 18th of 1937, Waldo Peirce would be the one to paint the portrait that appeared.

In 1920 Peirce would also marry his second wife Ivy Troutman.

The two would stay married for the rest of Peirce's time in Paris,

where he would continue to be moderately successful at selling his work, even though he





continued to be supported by his father's wealth. At the end of the decade Waldo and Ivy separated and Peirce would marry his third wife Alzira Boehm in 1930, who would mother his first children giving birth to twins in 1930. The family soon moved back to Bangor Maine and would move into a house directly across the street from his childhood

home. It was at this time that Peirce would begin to gain popularity as his still life's and portraits were recognized for their beauty. He would paint bars that he would frequent and halls, he would paint portraits of himself, his growing family, friends, and even presidents. He painted still lifes depicting fishing and hunting, and he was even commissioned in 1938 to paint two murals for the U.S. post office in Troy, New York. Peirces fame peaked in the thirties. He was called many thing like the American



Renoir” and “The Ernest Hemingway of painting” to which he snarkily responded “They'll never call Ernest Hemingway the Waldo Peirce of writing.”After his return to the states Peirce would have another child with Alzira. After his father's death in 1936 Peirce

would be left with his 1.3 million dollar, now worth 13 million, estate during the hardest days of the Great Depression. Peirce would also often visit his friend



Ernest Hemingway in Key West for extended periods of time, sometimes with and sometimes without his family. Peirce would marry one more time in his life at the age of 62 to Ellen Larson with whom he would have 2 more kids with, giving him a grand total of five kids over four wives. The two would come to get a house in Tucson Arizona to spend the winter, an Apartment

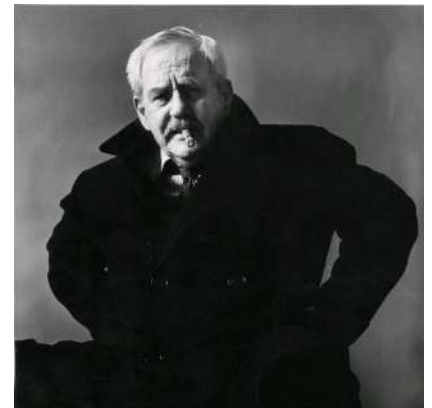
REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)			
SERIAL NUMBER U 24	1. NAME (Print) Waldo Peirce		ORDER NUMBER
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) Pomona Rockland N.Y.			
3. MAILING ADDRESS Pomona N.Y.			
4. TELEPHONE S.V. 1390	5. AGE IN YEARS 57	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Bangor Maine	
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Waldo Peirce			
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS none			
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Residence			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE			
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42)		16-21630-1 Waldo Peirce (Registrant's signature)	

in New York, and a house in Newbury Massachusetts, all in addition to his Bangor estate. Peirce would paint everyday for the rest of his life, often opting to give away the beautiful art, and he would even try to enlist in WWII at the age of 58. he died of cerebral thrombosis on

March 18th 1970 at his home in Newbury, but the legacy of art he left behind would last far beyond his lifetime. Peirce's life shows the significance a veterans life can have after war. Peirce, after seeing all the brutality manifested in WWI, stands as a shining example of what



a human can accomplish post-conflict and of the full and successful lives that were went on to be lived by many of the veterans of the war. These veterans were not simply war heroes, whose stories deserve to be honored, but scholars, artists, tradesmen, family-men, lovers, and fathers, whose sacrifices, stories and impacts on the world deserve to never be forgotten.



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