

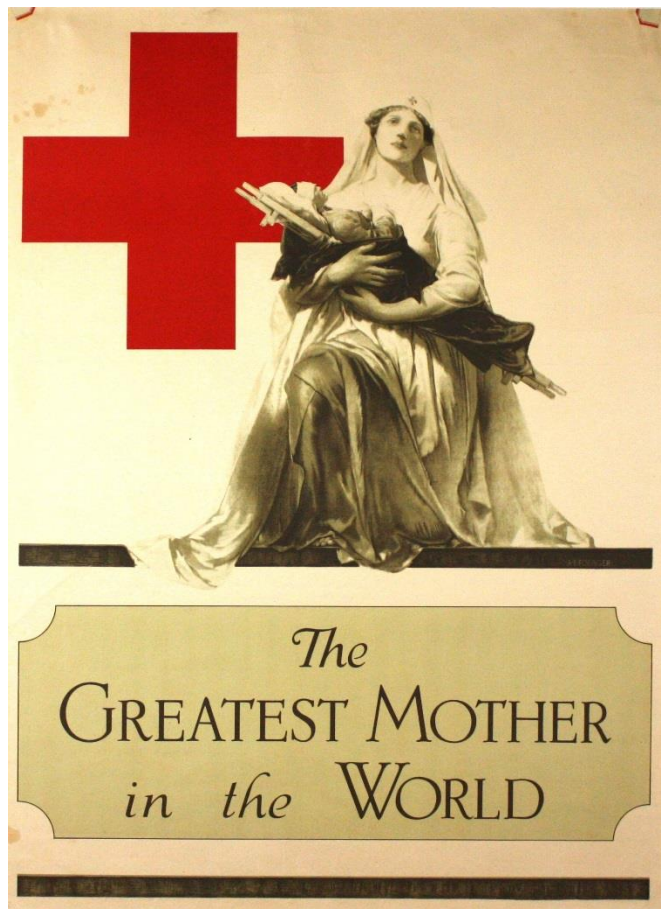
NJS Presents**Museums, Archives, Artifacts, and Documents News****In this Issue:*****Alonzo Earl Foringer's Greatest Mother in the World:******The New Jersey Roots of the Most Famous Poster of World War I*****By Nicholas P. Ciotola****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v3i2.88>**

Despite renewed interest in the illustrated posters of World War I brought about by the commemoration of the war's centennial, few extant works in either the academic or public history sectors offer comprehensive explorations of individual posters. This article provides a microhistory of The Greatest Mother in the World (1918), an impactful lithographic poster designed by New Jersey muralist Alonzo Earl Foringer and inspired by a slogan from a Princeton graduate turned advertising executive named Courtland Smith. Printed and distributed in the millions, Foringer's poster reached a level of mass appeal unsurpassed by any other piece of American visual propaganda produced in the war years. A detailed look at the background and impact of this important poster explores a lesser-known and understudied aspect of World War I history, while also affording an interdisciplinary research model that can be utilized for future studies of additional posters and their place in American visual culture.

It is perhaps the most memorable image in the history of Italian Renaissance art. In Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1499), a seated, berobed Virgin Mary cradles the lifeless body of an adult Jesus Christ. Fifteenth-century viewers marveled at the beauty and humanity of the sculpture, which Michelangelo carved from a single slab of Carrara marble. Four hundred years later, *Pietà* provided the inspiration for a Red Cross fundraising poster by a New Jersey-based muralist named

Alonzo Earl Foringer. In Foringer's World War I version, a Red Cross nurse in uniform assumes the role of the Madonna. Her youth, posturing, clothing, and expression all emulate that of Michelangelo's Virgin Mary. But instead of cradling Jesus Christ, her soothing arms comfort a bedridden and bandaged doughboy.

In recent years, scholars, archivists, librarians, and museum professionals have



The Greatest Mother in the World, 1918, Alonzo Earl Foringer (1878-1948). Offset Lithograph. Collection of the New Jersey State Museum, Gift of Mrs. Ben Hagen, FA1971.38.40.

demonstrated a renewed interest in the illustrated posters of World War I. Brought about, in part, by international plans to commemorate the centennial of the war, their work has resulted in a wide array of books, articles, and exhibitions. Academic studies by art historians have examined the artistic merits and symbolism of illustrated posters, while history professors have explored the social, cultural, and military contexts in which they were created.¹ Public historians, meanwhile, have heightened the general public's knowledge of these posters through illustrated publications and exhibitions.² Despite these efforts,

¹ See Robert Cozzolino et al., eds., *World War I and American Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); David Lubin, *Grand Illusions: American Art and the First World War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Pearl James, ed., *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

² See David Bownes and Robert Fleming, *Posters of the First World War* (Oxford, England: Shire Publications/National Army Museum, 2014); and Nigel Steel and Richard Slocombe, eds., *Posters of the First World War* (London, England: Imperial War Museum, 2015). Recent exhibitions include: *Posters as Munitions*,

comparatively few works in either the academic or public history realms offer in-depth explorations of individual posters.³ An increased number of interdisciplinary studies on a poster-by-poster basis – studies that explore a particular poster’s creator, design, purpose, social context, print run, display, and short – and long-term impact – would do well to augment the current scholarship on these important cultural artifacts from a true golden age of American illustration art.

Using such a framework, this article explores one of the two million artifacts and specimens currently housed in the [New Jersey State Museum](#) – Alonzo Foringer’s *Greatest Mother in the World* (1918). The artifact is one of eighty-four World War I posters in the State Museum collection, many of which will be exhibited in the upcoming exhibition, *Embattled Emblems: Posters and Flags of the First World War* (16 September 2017 – 19 August 2018). The importance of Foringer’s stunning lithographic poster featuring a Red Cross nurse cradling a fallen doughboy cannot be overstated. Today, many suggest that the most famous American poster of World War I is James Montgomery Flagg’s *I Want You for U. S. Army* (1917). Important during the war era, the colorful poster featuring a stern-faced Uncle Sam leveling his patriotic appeal directly to the viewer is now ubiquitous and universal. This is due to the fact that the poster underwent a second life as a recruitment tool during World War II and, more importantly, enjoyed widespread reproduction in the second half of the twentieth century in a variety of media.

During the First World War, however, the most popular poster was not Flagg’s, but Foringer’s. More than sixty million impressions of Foringer’s *Greatest Mother in the World* were

National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO, 2017; *Posters and Patriotism: Selling the War in New York*, Museum of the City of New York, New York, NY, 2017; and *Pennsylvania at War: World War I Posters from the Pennsylvania State Archives*, Harrisburg, PA, 2017.

³ Two exceptions are Ann P. Linder, *World War I in 40 Posters* (New York, NY: Stackpole Books, 2016); and Martyn Thatcher and Anthony Quinn, *Kitchener Wants You: The Man, the Poster and the Legacy* (London, England: Unicorn Press, 2016).

printed and distributed during the war. The poster was reduced in size and printed in millions of newspapers and magazines. It was also blown up and placed on billboards and sky signs. Whereas Flagg borrowed a British idea for his Uncle Sam poster, Foringer's image was so powerful that England requested it for use in their million-dollar Red Cross drive – a further testament to the poster's popularity in its day. This article explores the historical background and impact of Alonzo Foringer's *Greatest Mother in the World*. The poster is of particular relevance to *New Jersey Studies* because its creator lived in the Garden State.

Since Foringer has never been the subject of a biographical study, retrospective exhibition, or catalogue raisonné, extant information about his early life is very limited. An examination of census records, city directories, and other genealogical sources, however, reveals much about this lesser-documented artist's early life and work, as well as the centrality of New Jersey to his career. Foringer was born on 1 February 1878 in the Western Pennsylvania coal mining community of Kaylor, Bradys Bend Township, Armstrong County. The Census of 1880 shows three-year-old Alonzo residing there with his parents, Winfield and Catharine, and his four siblings, Lillian, Thomas, Irene and Edna. Twenty years later, in 1900, the family resided at 2308 Wylie Avenue in the Hill District neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Listed as a clerk in both the 1880 and 1900 censuses, it appears that Winfield's white collar work facilitated the family's migration to Pittsburgh. The move from provincial coal patch town to wealthy city greatly benefitted budding artist Alonzo, who received his early artistic training in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. He then went on to work with a small engraving firm in the city.⁴ Foringer also took night classes with Horatio Stevenson, a noted local artist who operated an art school and later served as president of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh.

⁴ J. F. Diffenbacher's *Directory of Pittsburg and Allegheny Cities for 1895* (Pittsburg, PA: Stevenson & Foster Company, 1895), 344.

Over the next decade, Foringer spent his formative years as an art student and upstart



Pietà, 1499, Michelangelo (1475-1564), on view in the Vatican Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1964, Collection of the New York Public Library.

practitioner in both Pittsburgh and New York City, where his older brother, also an artist, had moved in search of work. In 1895, Foringer received training in New York from artist Henry Siddons Mowbray (1858-1928). He went on to assist Mowbray with murals for the Prudential Insurance Building in Newark, the Morgan Library in New York, and the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court.⁵ Beginning in 1902, Foringer apprenticed with Edwin Howland Blashfield (1848–1936) and collaborated with the well-established muralist on a

number of projects. These included the dome of the Hudson County Courthouse in Jersey City and the Church of the Savior in Philadelphia.⁶ Foringer also executed murals at the Utah State Capitol in Salt Lake City; Kenosha County Courthouse in Kenosha, Wisconsin; City Hall in Yonkers, New York; Mercer County Courthouse in Mercer, Pennsylvania; and Home Savings and Loan Company in Youngstown, Ohio.⁷

It was around 1910 that Alonzo Foringer settled in the state that he would call home for the remainder of his life. His locale of choice was Grantwood, an unincorporated municipality straddling Cliffside Park and Ridgefield in Bergen County, New Jersey. Named for its location

⁵ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 37 (New York, NY: James T. White and Company, 1951), 495.

⁶ *The Brochure of the Mural Painters: A National Society* (New York, NY: Kalkhoff Press, 1916), 52-53, 62; Edwin Howland Blashfield, "Considerations on Mural Painting," *The American Architect* 103 no. 1937 (5 February 1913), 73-87.

⁷ "Youngstown Association Secures Mural Paintings," *The American Building Association News* 40 no. 6 (June 1920), 286.

directly across the Hudson River from Ulysses S. Grant's Tomb, Grantwood developed a reputation as a haven for artists beginning in the 1890s. The bucolic, hillside community offered more room for studio space, lower rents, and a quieter pace of life than Manhattan, while still allowing artists to ply their trade in the nearby city. Grantwood's reputation as an artist's haven got a boost in 1913 when Man Ray (1890-1976) chose the community as his residence, stimulating another influx of artists.⁸ The area also witnessed a rising population of theatrical performers, musicians, designers, writers, and other creative types due to the burgeoning motion picture industry taking shape in the adjacent community of Fort Lee.

The Census of 1910 records Alonzo Foringer as a resident of 471 Edgewater Avenue in Cliffside Park, New Jersey – the geographical center of Grantwood. The thirty-two-year-old had again taken up residence with his parents Winfield and Catharine and his four siblings. In 1910, Winfield was employed as a bookkeeper for a steel company, suggesting that ties to the Pittsburgh iron and steel industries had helped him to find work closer to his two adult sons. Several years later, Alonzo remained with his parents when they moved to 31 Cortland Place on the other side of Grantwood. Although experienced as a muralist, Foringer broadened his artistic output out of economic necessity. For many years, he earned a living as a successful note and stock certificate designer for the American Bank Note Company and as an illustrator for *Scribner's Magazine* and *The Ladies' Home Journal*. He worked primarily in oils, but also executed illustrations using pen and ink. Foringer's draft registration card, issued in 1918, shows that the artist was still living with his parents in Grantwood at the time of World War I.

It was the First World War that directly spawned Foringer's most important contribution to American art. Changing infantry tactics, trench warfare, and new weapons including the

⁸ Francis M. Naumann, *Conversion to Modernism: The Early Work of Man Ray* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press/Montclair Art Museum, 2003).

machine gun, long-range artillery, flamethrowers, tanks, and poison gas brought about devastating casualty rates on the battlefields of Europe. Founded by Clara Barton in 1881, the American Red Cross experienced the greatest growth in its history when helping to alleviate the worldwide suffering brought about by the so-called “First Modern War.” The Red Cross recruited nurses, staffed hospitals, organized ambulance teams and stocked canteens full of clothing, water, and

foodstuffs for armies near the battle front.

Red Cross programs not only benefited American soldiers. The organization also provided relief to allies and civilian populations impacted by the fighting.

Before the war, the Red Cross had sixteen thousand members across 107 chapters.

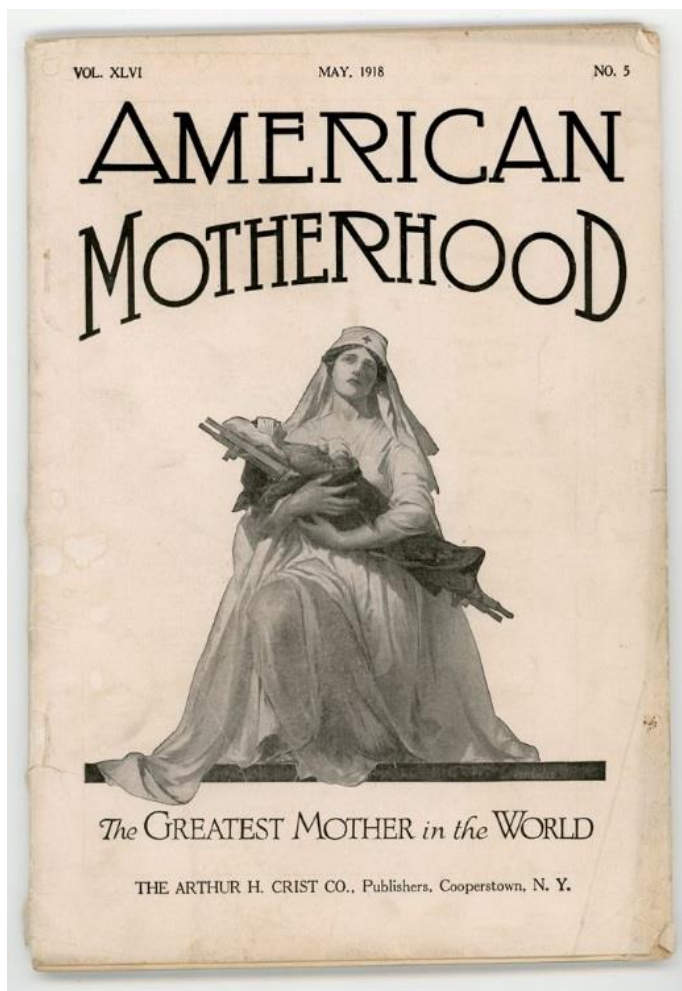
After the war, it had twenty million members and nearly four thousand chapters.

This precipitous wartime growth was buoyed by private donations to the organization amounting to more than four

hundred million dollars. At the center of the massive advertising campaign that

raised this money was Alonzo Foringer’s

*Greatest Mother in the World.*⁹



The maternal messaging of Foringer's artwork inspired the editors of American Motherhood to use it as cover art for the May 1918 issue. Private Collection.

⁹ For the history of the Red Cross during World War I, see Marian Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross: From Clara Barton to the New Deal* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); and Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press), 2013.

Like many propaganda efforts during World War I, the roots of Red Cross wartime marketing can be traced to the Committee on Public Information headed by George Creel. Handpicked by Woodrow Wilson to convince Americans to support a war that the president himself had campaigned against, Creel oversaw a wide variety of propaganda initiatives beginning shortly after the April 1917 declaration of war on Germany.¹⁰ These ranged from the coordination of patriotic speeches by so-called “Four-Minute Men” to the recruitment of artists to create posters in support of the Treasury Department’s five Liberty Loan campaigns. When, in April 1918, the Red Cross sought assistance from the Committee on Public Information to promote its Second War Fund drive, Creel assigned the task to Lewis B. Jones of the Division of Advertising.¹¹ Jones’ full-time job as the advertising manager for Eastman Kodak gave him plenty of contacts in the world of advertising. He quickly turned to one of those contacts, the Joseph Richards Agency of New York City, where he obtained the services of adman Courtland N. Smith. Hailing from Glen Ridge, New Jersey, Smith was the ideal choice for the task. The Class of 1908 Princeton graduate had spent several months in 1917 working as a business manager for the Red Cross national headquarters in Washington, D.C. and was already a firm believer in the organization’s mission.¹²

Many great marketing slogans are born from one moment of inspiration. Smith’s epiphany came while traveling on a particularly slow-moving Pullman car from Sag Harbor to his office in New York City. On a piece of leftover wrapping paper, he scribbled an emotional, two hundred-word pitch about the work then being accomplished by the Red Cross on the battle-torn fields of

¹⁰ For the history of the Committee on Public Information, see George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920) and Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

¹¹ George Creel, *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 45.

¹² *Approaching the Fifteenth, 1908 in 1922* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1922), 294-96.

Europe. His account ended with a simple slogan that would form the basis for the biggest advertising campaign in the history of the Red Cross:¹³

Stretching forth her hands to all in need, to Jew or Gentile, black or white, knowing no favorite, yet favoring all... Reaching out her hands across the sea to No-Man's land; to cheer with warmer comforts thousands who must stand and wait in stench and crawling holes and water-soaked entrenchments, where cold and wet bite deeper, so they write, than Bosche steel or lead. She's warming thousands, feeding thousands, healing thousands from her shore: The Greatest Mother in World – the Red Cross.¹⁴



Foringer’s image appeared with Smith’s original advertising narrative in many magazines, including the May 1918 issue of *The Cosmopolitan Magazine*. Private Collection.

The next morning, Smith shared his “Greatest Mother in the World” catchphrase with his boss, Joseph Richards, who was immediately impressed with its powerful simplicity, familial appeal, and inherent potential to “inspire the whole of the United States.” Smith also provided a rough sketch, the exact details of which are unknown, and the conversation turned to names of artists who could best contribute the refined illustration. Company vice president Milton Towne suggested Alonzo Foringer. When the New Jersey artist arrived at the company offices later that week, he too was thoroughly captivated by

¹³ Joseph Richards’ full account of the origins of the “Greatest Mother in the World” slogan can be found in “A Plaque of a Red Cross Poster,” *The Numismatist* 32 no. 7 (July 1919), 276-77.

¹⁴ Parts of the original text that Smith composed on the train car appeared alongside Foringer’s final image in periodicals nationwide. See, for example, *The Cosmopolitan Magazine* 64 no. 6 (May 1918), 12.

the slogan and agreed to submit three finished sketches. The advertising team and representatives of the Red Cross unanimously selected the sketch that emulated Michelangelo's *Pietà* and officially contracted Foringer to produce the final artwork. The artist later recalled that he conducted research for his "modern Madonna" in art history books at New Jersey libraries and received "a nominal but satisfactory sum" as payment for the commission.¹⁵

Once designed and approved, Foringer's *Greatest Mother in the World* was reproduced and distributed in a variety of forms. The example owned by the New Jersey State Museum is a 27.5" x 20.5" poster fabricated using the offset lithographic process. During World War I, poster production was standardized and the size of Foringer's poster is categorized as a "half-sheet." Foringer used New York sculptor/artist Agnes Tait (1894-1981) as his model, claiming that she possessed the "dreamy expression and languid natural grace" that he envisioned for his Madonna.¹⁶ Foringer later claimed that he also "put something of his own mother" into the figure. He executed the painting as a monochrome, with the only pop of color being the crimson of the Red Cross. The whereabouts of the original artwork from which the poster was produced is unknown. Printed on inexpensive, newsprint-like paper, World War I-era posters were not designed to last. Pristine posters are therefore quite rare. The example in the New Jersey State Museum is in very good condition, marred only by a few instances of foxing and discoloration. It also retains the remnants of original adhesive stickers that held the poster on a wall during the war years. Other than the famous slogan in capitalized lettering that forms a pedestal, or dais, on which the nurse/Madonna sits, the only text that appears on the poster is a typeset imprint in the lower right corner reading "Form N.Y. 32 Second War Fund." The latter refers to the Red Cross fundraising drive for which

¹⁵ "Alonzo Foringer, of Poster Fame," *New York Times* (10 December 1948), 26.

¹⁶ *The World Magazine and Story Section*, insert in *New York World* (28 July 1918), 4.



Newspapers published half-tone versions of Foringer's Madonna. This example is from Washington Herald, 25 May 1918. Private Collection.

the artwork was solicited, while the former possibly refers to the lithographic form used to print the poster. The name of the lithographic studio that fabricated the poster is unknown.¹⁷

Foringer's *Greatest Mother in the World* utilizes Christian messaging and an appeal to motherhood as its chief persuasive devices. To great effect, Foringer transforms Michelangelo's Virgin Mary into a Red Cross nurse. The long, flowing robes of the figure in the Renaissance sculpture become the white, sanitary gown of a twentieth-century wartime medical worker. The Christ figure becomes a diminutive soldier who is bandaged and strapped to a stretcher. His arms

are peacefully folded across his chest. Through the simple religious metaphor, Foringer ascribes the noble attributes of the Virgin Mary to Red Cross nurses everywhere. The suffering of American soldiers, meanwhile, becomes the suffering of Jesus Christ himself. Like that of the Savior, their injuries and deaths are a sacrifice for all humankind. Foringer effectively uses the nurse's serene, hopeful gaze as a subtle suggestion of need. To support the Red Cross is to support the Greatest Mother in the World, the mother of Jesus Christ himself. The act of donating to the cause, therefore, is transformed into an act of Christian duty. The overall religious message is underscored by the red of the cross itself, the only color in an otherwise monochromatic image. The cross is

¹⁷ For a contemporary account of the processes by which World War I posters were designed and reproduced using lithography, see *Joseph Pennell's Liberty Loan Poster* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1918).

situated in an open area to the left, “keeping with the decision not to obscure the cross in any pictorial work,” but also so that its power as a Christian symbol remains at the forefront of the message.¹⁸ The entire composition emulates the classical figures that Foringer created for stock certificates, bank notes, and murals. The classical homage is subtly underscored by the nurse’s bare feet, echoing the statues of ancient Greece and Rome.



Foringer’s poster on view at the Royal Exchange Building, London, 1918. Collection of the Library of Congress.

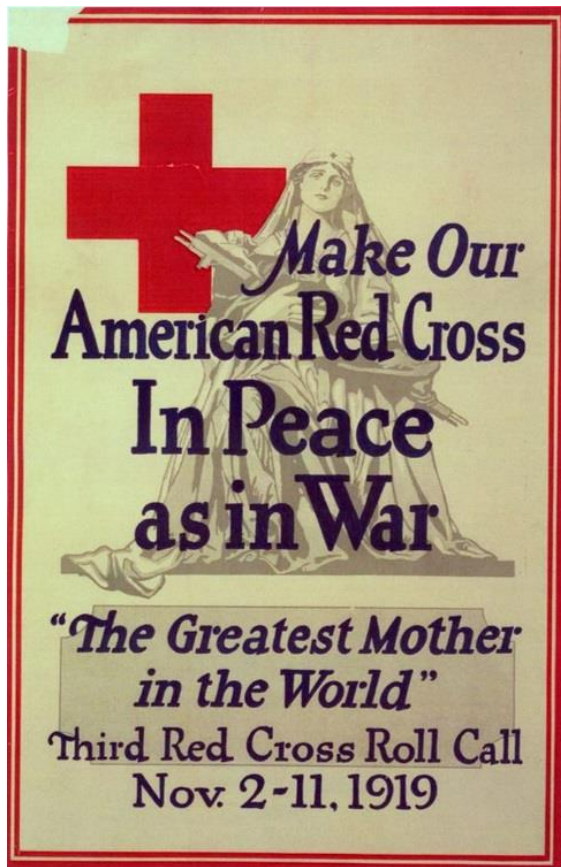
The monumental size of Foringer’s Madonna empowers women and valorizes the work of Red Cross nurses. Of the two figures, the female is the largest and the strongest. Her colossal stature dwarfs the diminutive soldier, who appears as would a coddled infant at her breast. The nurse’s arms protect the man from harm while her dignified gaze actively solicits further intervention and assistance. Whereas the female nurse is ready, willing, and able to act, the male soldier is the epitome of inaction. Bandaged and bloody, he can neither walk nor see. The well-being of the man is in hands of the woman – a working

woman who, though still maternal, has left the confines of the home to serve her country. Many have interpreted Foringer’s *Greatest Mother in the World* as one of the most positive images of women produced during the war era. A few authors have reservations about this assessment,

¹⁸ “Notable Posters for the Red Cross,” *The Poster* 10 no. 1 (January 1918), 73.

instead viewing her as “a passive figure of suffering and sacrifice” with an attractive, youthful appearance that “demands perfection from women.”¹⁹

The Red Cross printed ten million copies of the *Greatest Mother in the World* poster, helping the organization to raise more than one hundred and fifty million dollars in the spring and



This post-Armistice reprint of Foringer's Madonna promoted the Third Red Cross Roll Call of 1919. Collection of the Library of Congress.

summer of 1918.²⁰ Smaller half-tone versions of Foringer's image appeared in twenty different women's publications, with a total circulation of twelve million copies. Another twelve million appeared in twenty-six national weeklies. The image was also circulated in theatre programs, farm and trade publications, and a host of miscellaneous magazines, with a grand total of fifty-seven million images appearing in printed form. Photographers recreated the scene using live performing artists as models while store owners reproduced it in their downtown display windows.²¹ In New York, it appeared on hundreds of billboards and was repainted in ten-color enlargements on sky signs that

¹⁹ For gender interpretations of Foringer's poster, see Margaret Tennant, "Enduring Charity: The Red Cross and War Charity Beyond the Great War," in David Monger et al., eds., *Endurance in the First World War* (New Castle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 31-48; and Helen Sims, "Posters and Images of Women in the Great War," in Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe, eds., *Representations of Gender from Prehistory to the Present* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 168-82.

²⁰ "Red Cross Advertising Campaign Based Upon Heart Appeal," *Printer's Ink* 53 no. 8 (23 May 1918), 104-106; Montrose J. Moses, "Making Posters Fight," *The Bookman* 47 no. 5 (July 1918), 510.

²¹ Underwood & Underwood distributed a photographic image that recreated Foringer's poster using a musician named Marguerite Fontrese as the model. See "Foringer's Red Cross Poster Girl Wins New Success in Concert and Opera," *Musical Courier* 80 no. 6 (5 February 1920), 64.

towered hundreds of feet above the city streets.²² The image was so popular that it even made an impact across the Atlantic Ocean. Reproduced on an even larger scale than New York, the *Greatest Mother in the World* covered the entire facade of the Royal Exchange in downtown London as part of British Red Cross fundraising efforts.²³ Foringer earned instant celebrity status for his achievement, garnering national acclaim in newspapers and receiving fan mail from around the country. The image was so entrenched in American popular culture that a convicted murderer requested clemency from the court on the grounds that he had given Foringer the original idea after it had come to him in a vision.²⁴ There were also reports of a vaudevillian and his wife traveling the country with a live performance in which they claimed to be the artist and model for the *Greatest Mother in the World*.²⁵

In December 1918, Red Cross officials reprinted the poster in order to promote their holiday season fundraising drive. The only difference is that this iteration of the poster has a typeset imprint reading “Red Cross Christmas Roll Call, Dec. 16-23rd.” For the same holiday season, Foringer’s work appeared on a long narrow poster in tandem with a nurse illustration by the celebrated *Saturday Evening Post* artist Harrison Fisher (1877-1934). Additional versions of Foringer’s poster were printed with text promoting the work of specific Red Cross chapters around the country. After the Armistice, the Red Cross reprinted the image for the Third Red Cross Roll Call, a fundraising drive held from 2-11 November 1919. In that same year, J. F. Newman Jeweler’s in New York City issued a limited edition silver plaque that memorialized Foringer’s artwork in medallion form.²⁶ In 1920, Foringer created a second poster with new artwork in support

²² “Alonzo Foringer, of Poster Fame,” 26.

²³ “Red Cross Campaign with Richards,” *Advertising & Selling* 31 no. 17 (16 October 1920), 17; “News of the Red Cross,” *The Hays Free Press* (9 January 1919), 7.

²⁴ “A Red Cross Painter: A. E. Foringer,” *The Red Cross Magazine* 13 no. 9 (September 1918), 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ “A Plaque for a Red Cross Poster,” 276.



Still the Greatest Mother in the World, 1920, Alonzo Earl Foringer (1878-1948). Offset Lithograph. Collection of Northern Illinois University Libraries.

of the Fourth Red Cross Roll Call, held 11-25 November 1920. Titled *Still the Greatest Mother in the World*, the poster features a standing, statuesque Red Cross nurse holding a crippled child instead of a soldier and offering a steadying hand to an elderly couple. The appeal asks viewers to continue their financial support of the aid organization even in time of peace.²⁷

After the Armistice, Alonzo Foringer resumed his work as a New Jersey-based muralist, bank note designer, and magazine illustrator. A perpetual bachelor, he moved with his parents and siblings to an estate in Saddle River, New Jersey in 1922. The family appear to have purchased the property with Foringer's art career in mind,

immediately converting a cottage on the two-acre grounds into a studio space.²⁸ Foringer lived and worked in Saddle River until his death on 8 December 1948. The next day, his lengthy obituary in the *New York Times* was dedicated almost exclusively to the origin and execution of the most famous American poster of World War I. Though thirty years had passed since its creation, the assessment of one contemporary critic still held true – “That among the many posters there is one of very special merit, embodying in itself all the attributes of humanity and deserving of ever lasting memory. I refer to *The Greatest Mother in the World*, by A. E. Foringer.”²⁹

²⁷ “Red Cross Campaign with Richards,” 17; “What God Means to Me,” *Unity* 86 no. 16 (6 January 1921), 250.

²⁸ *Alonzo Foringer House and Studio*, New Jersey Office of Cultural and Environmental Services, Historic Preservation Section, Individual Structure Survey Form, Historic Sites Inventory No. 9, 29 August 1986.

²⁹ “Open Letter to the Trade,” *The Reporter* 71 no.7 (July 1918), 15.

Nicholas P. Ciotola is Curator of Cultural History at the [New Jersey State Museum](#). Previously, he was a curator at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. He has published widely on aspects of American history and material culture and held additional public history positions at the State Museum of Pennsylvania, National Park Service, U. S. Forest Service, University of New Mexico Oral History Program, and National Hispanic Cultural Center.