War Is Over!
On March 31, April 5 and 6th, 1919 three regiments of Tennessee soldiers arrived here from France. They journeyed by train to Knoxville, Nashville, and Chattanooga for parades and a hero’s welcome. In Nashville they disembarked at a rail siding near Centennial Park and marched to the cheers of a crowd estimated between 100,000 and 250,000 people. The route led to the state capitol and a speech by the governor. The temporary victory arch displayed the places of their campaigns in France: Belleau Wood, Marne, Argonne, Chateau Thierry, Verdun, Hindenberg Line, Ypres, and St. Mihiel. The crowd gazes up, likely at a flyover, while the soldiers look straight ahead, as trained.

The large houses at right would soon be razed and the War Memorial Building built, which stands today. Inside its courtyard are engraved the names of 3,400 Tennesseans who gave their lives during the Great War. The Hermitage Hotel stands in background at left. The large building in background at right was the YMCA, opened in 1912. Woodrow Wilson dedicated the YMCA and then gave a luncheon speech at the Hermitage Hotel.
Nashville’s Naval Hero

During the great war Admiral Albert Gleaves commanded the United States Navy Cruiser and Transport Force. This grew to 149 ships and over 60,000 sailors and officers. Gleaves mastered the huge logistical task of transporting nearly one million troops across the Atlantic amidst enemy submarine-infested waters. He accomplished this superbly and with zero fatalities. After war’s end, he brought them back home. He was recipient of both the Army and Navy Distinguished Service Medals.

Grateful mothers of Nashville solidiers gave a ceremonial gold sword to their native son. A reception at the Ryman was followed by a banquet at the Hermitage Hotel. Part of the souvenir menu is displayed here. Cigars for everyone!

DINNER
IN HONOR OF
ADMIRAL ALBERT GLEAVES
HERMITAGE HOTEL
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 1919, 7 P.M.

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE NASHVILLE BRANCH OF THE
NAVY LEAGUE OF THE
UNITED STATES

Celery
Salted Almonds
Olives

Consonme Poinaniere

Broiled Spanish Mackerel, Maitre d’Hotel

Shoe String Potatoes

Half Fried Spring Chicken, Country Gravy

Potato Croquettes

Green Peas

Combination Salad

Brick Ice Cream

Assorted Cakes

Demi Tasse

Cigars

In 1919 Gleaves was promoted to full Admiral and commanded the Asiatic Fleet. His career, begun in 1877, spanned nearly five decades and took him across the globe. He was said to have originated the idea of refueling ships at sea, and also oversaw the Navy’s first torpedo factory. The crew of a ship he once commanded, the Dolphin, discovered the greatest known depth in the Atlantic Ocean. He wrote several books, including biographies of several famous naval officers and stories from his own life. He said, “To seamen a ship becomes endowed with human virtues and faults; she ceases to be a mere inanimate thing.”

A trivia side note:
During the WW1 era, Admiral Gleaves’s superior, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels issued General Order 99 in 1914. By this order, any liquor, beer or wine aboard navy ships was abolished. It was said that disgruntled sailors then began calling their ration of coffee “a cup of Joe” and the phrase is still in use today.
Supporting Our Troops
It was common practice for ladies to work a full-time job and then spend several more hours producing bandages and other supplies to aid the troops overseas. The picture here was taken in the Grille Room (today’s Capitol Grille) on a day when the Red Cross operated the hotel for a fund-raising campaign. They staffed positions including bellhop, elevator operator, and waitress. They sold donated flowers across the neighborhood, and even drove taxi-cabs. A dinner-dance in the restaurant capped off the day. Something like $20,000 in today’s dollars was raised.

Many of the leaders of the “right to vote” suffrage campaigns of that era put their efforts aside to help the war effort during our national emergency. The Nashville Equal Suffrage League offered their office in the Hermitage Hotel for use as a Navy recruiting office. The efforts of nation-wide suffrage fund-raising financed four overseas hospitals that were 100% staffed by women. The extent of local organizations and exertions by thousands are chronicled in an amazing book, “Davidson County Women in the World War – 1917-1919”, Foster & Parkes Co, 1923.

Chef Manuel A. Silva
This newspaper photo is our one and only picture of this accomplished chef. Chef Silva led the Hermitage Hotel culinary team during 1917-1919 and then from 1922-1931. Silva was born in the Azores Islands, Portugal and came to this country in 1888.

Chef Silva was one of four local chefs who directed the food preparation for a welcoming feast at the Hippodrome, enjoyed by three regiments of approximately 1,200 soldiers each. The Hermitage Hotel kitchen staff and its ovens helped produce roast turkey and baked ham, along with cranberry sauce, potato salad, rolls, coffee, buttermilk, nuts, fruits, pickles, celery, radishes, brick ice cream, apple pie, all served with 500 home-made cakes baked by local citizens.

During the war, the management of the Hermitage Hotel helped lead local efforts to conserve food, including meat, flour and sugar. A state hotel association leader in this program was popular Hermitage Manager Homer Wilson, who was playfully honored by the chef on the next page’s menu with a “Smothered Homer Squab” entree. As of 1917 chefs and cooks were also furnished by hotels and restaurants in Nashville, Memphis and Chattanooga to help train U.S. Army cooks for six to eight week sessions.

It is interesting to note that an entree on the Admiral Gleaves banquet menu was Broiled Spanish Mackerel – likely the chef’s recommendation and perhaps a personal favorite; also fitting for the guest of honor, a man of the oceans.
These vintage menus of the Hermitage Hotel are dated 1917, 1920, 1923 and 1924 in descending order. Chef Silva’s talents are readily apparent.

Can you spot Spain or Portugal on the menus?

To share your own “news” please drop by and see Tom Vickstrom, telephone 615-345-7123 or e-mail archives@thehermitagehotel.com

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