

HOW WWI CHANGED AMERICA:

The Influenza Epidemic

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:

Jennifer D. Keene, Ph.D.:

The Spanish influenza epidemic began in the spring of 1918. It occurred in three waves. The first was an outbreak that began in some training camps in Kansas and Georgia, spread to Europe. The second was in the fall of 1918, which was the most lethal and the third was the fall of 1919.

Christopher Capozzola, Ph.D.:

As soldiers at the Western Front in Europe are starting to get ill with the flu, there are rules of military censorship that basically silence that so that most people in the home countries don't know about it. This is because they're afraid of letting the other side know that their soldiers are sick.

Libby H. O'Connell, Ph.D.:

The great flu pandemic of 1918, 1919 became known as the Spanish flu because the Spanish were neutral so they didn't have the same censorship. They report about it in the newspapers in Spain and people go, "Oh, look, there's a flu in Spain, must be a Spanish flu." And that's why we call it the Spanish flu, it has nothing to do with its origins.

Christopher Capozzola, Ph.D.:

It might seem like a coincidence that a global pandemic of influenza happens at the same time as the First World War, but in fact they're related. This is a time when you have tons of people living in close quarters together, particularly those who are serving in the military. You have shortages of food and good housing that mean that people are just not as healthy as they might otherwise be. And you have millions of people moving back and forth across their own countries, across the Atlantic. This is a perfect storm for the explosion of the flu into a global crisis.

John H. Morrow, Jr., Ph.D.:

The flu epidemic spread rapidly. Soldiers died on ships going to Europe to fight the war. They died in labor camps and frontline camps where they were all crowded in together.

Christopher Capozzola, Ph.D.:

The fall of 1918 is this crucial sort of moment of battle between the Allies and the Central Powers and both sides of the war are being hit and hit hard by the flu.

Wilson knows that he still needs to keep sending thousands and thousands of soldiers to France if the United States is going to win this war. He also knows many of the men he puts on those ships will die of the flu before they get to Europe. He makes that fateful decision to keep loading the ships. That is a difficult decision for him and a devastating one for many of the men who boarded those ships.

Libby H. O'Connell, Ph.D.:

There is very little understanding of just how vast this epidemic is. It is, we think, the biggest plague in the history of the world, bigger than the Black Plague. We don't even think of it as affecting economies, affecting the output of agriculture, all of these different aspects, but in some areas it really cut to the bone.

The United States actually loses about six or 700,000 people and the people who were the most affected are relatively young. They are men and women between the ages of 20 and 40. The people who die are at the prime of their productive lives. It's going to have a huge effect on the military and it's gonna have a huge effect in densely populated regions of the Earth.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

John H. Morrow, Jr., Ph.D.:

The country it hits the worst is India where you have large populations crowded together. And in some respects, the greatest war in history to that time will lead to the greatest pandemic of these people who have been weakened fighting the war and are therefore more subject to falling prey to the flu. In the end, the flu pandemic kills twice as many people as the First World War does.

Jennifer D. Keene, Ph.D.:

There are many tragic stories connected to the Spanish influenza epidemic. For example, there was a soldier by the name of Edwin Frick and he had served overseas in an artillery unit. He had been in and out of the hospital with trench foot. The war is over, he's getting ready to go home in the winter of 1919 when he contracts Spanish influenza. He recovers and he writes to his parents and says, "The next letter that you get from me will be one when I am back in the good ol' USA." But in fact, the next letter that his parents get is from the hospital telling them that he was readmitted with a second bout of flu and has died. These were, in some ways, for many Americans the most tragic stories. People who had lived through the war only to die of Spanish influenza.

Libby H. O'Connell, Ph.D.:

I get very angry at other historians who say, "There were those who were killed in action and then those who died of the flu." Come on, people! They would not have died of the flu if the war hadn't taken place! Those diseases were transmitted because of the density of men working closely together in bad conditions. And it's unfair to the memory of those men and women who died of the flu to think that, "Oh, well that's not part of the war." Of course it's part of the war.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

CREDITS

Executive Producer	LIBBY O'CONNELL, PH.D.
Mellon Project Director	JENNIFER ZOEBELEIN, PH.D.
Technical Producer	BARBARA MARANZANI
Education Coordinator	JAMES TAUB
Chief of Staff	DALE ARCHER

Historian Advisors
CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZOLA, Ph.D. - Massachusetts Institute of Technology
JENNIFER D. KEENE, Ph.D. - Chapman University
JOHN H. MORROW, Ph.D. - University of Georgia
JEFFREY T. SAMMONS, Ph.D. - New York University
HERMAN J. VIOLA, Ph.D. - Curator Emeritus, Smithsonian Institution

Director/Producer	KATHLEEN WILLIAMS
Producer/Editor/Colorist	ROSIE NAKAMURA
Director of Photography	BRYANT TWZ BROUSSEAU
Art Direction & Animation	AUTUMN NAKAMURA NEAL
	DARON NEALIS
	PIER DE SANCTIS
Production Manager	LISA EDWARD
Post Production Coordinator	JOE ANTON
Assistant Camera	BRIAN REILLY
Audio Technician	RICK ELDERS
Audio Mixing	HANS ERIK ERICKSON
Gaffer	LEO ALVAREZ
Key Grip	WILLIAM ANDERSON
Set Designer	LAUREN BURGE
Assistant Set Designer	ZELDA VYSSOTSKY
Production Assistant	ALLIE THOMS
Art Production Assistants	SEAN KELLEY
	NICK DAMICO
	COREY ASRAF
	SAEED SIAMAK
Set Carpenter	JERRY MRAZ
Hair & Makeup	ALEXANDRIA GILLES
	JENNI SHAW
Production Studio	hsc.tv

The World War One Centennial Commission
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
The Doughboy Foundation
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
National History Day
Pritzker Military Museum & Library
The National WWI Museum and Memorial

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

CREDITS

Still and Archival Footage Courtesy of

THE BRITISH LIBRARY

FLICKR

LEATHERBY LIBRARIES, CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY, CA

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, CHRONICLING AMERICA: HISTORIC AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS & PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE

NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

NATIONAL WWI MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL

WELLCOME COLLECTION

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Music

"IS THIS THE LOVE"

WRITTEN BY D. Q. WHITE & D. FOREMAN

COURTESY OF EXTREME MUSIC

"INFINITE"

WRITTEN BY R. V. K. POPE & D. KNIGHT

COURTESY OF EXTREME MUSIC