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9 speakers (Theo Mayer, Edward Lengel, Katherine Akey, Mike Schuster, Sarah Cureton, Veronica Calder, Doug Bigelow, Ron Eckart, Norma Eckart)

[0:00:08]

**Theo Mayer:** Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 88. It's about World War One Then, what was happening a hundred years ago, and it's about World War One Now, news and updates about the centennial and the commemoration. Before we get going, I wanted to remind our listeners that you can access the podcast by asking for it on your smart speaker, but you have to be specific. Say play WW1 Centennial News Podcast and your smart speaker will play the latest episode because after all, it's more than just a podcast, it's a conversation even with your smart speaker about the war that changed the world. In this episode, for a hundred years ago this week, it's our September Overview Roundtable with Dr. Edward Lengel, Katherine Akey, and myself. Mike Schuster updates us on American Forces in Siberia. Sarah Cureton and Veronica Calder join us from the New Jersey State World War One Centennial Committee. We're gonna talk football in World War One with freelance writer Doug Bigelow. Ron and Dr. Norma Eckart share the 100 Cities/100 Memorials Project from Caswell, North Carolina. And the Buzz where Katherine Akey highlights some of the World War One posts and stories from social media. World War One Centennial News is brought to you by the US World War One Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library and the Starr Foundation. I'm Theo Mayer, the chief technologist for the commission and your host. Welcome to the show. To provide a context for September 1918, Dr. Edward Lengel, Katherine Akey, and I got together to explore what was happening a hundred years ago this month, what were the overarching themes, the events, and the happenings in September of 1918. Here's what we talked about. Ed, let's start with you. In September, what was the main theme?

[0:02:25]

**Edward Lengel:** World War One kicks into high gear for the American Forces on the Western Front and indeed for the Allies in general as Ferdinand Foch's master plan for concentric offensives on the Western Front goes into operation with the different Allies attacking from different points along the front. The Americans first enter into combat with the US First Army. This is the first time an American commanded army will launch an offensive on the Western Front at Saint-Mihiel on September 12th. Then it shifts over to the northward on September 26th as a part of Foch's plan to launch the massive Meuse-Argonne offensive that's going to pull in one million American troops, and to this day, it remains the bloodiest and largest battle in American military history.

[0:03:26]

**Theo Mayer:** Back to the Battle of Saint-Mihiel, not only did Pershing command the US Army but he also had a sizeable number over a hundred thousand French under his army there, didn't he?

[0:03:37]

**Edward Lengel:** Yes, he did. A lot of armies on the Western Front now they were interchangeable to some degree and that French and British Armies can have troops of other nations under their command including Americans. Now, when the American First Army is created in August and moves into action in September, it incorporates, as you say a large number of French troops including aircraft, tanks, artillery, and infantry under Pershing's command. This is also a first in American history.

[0:04:09]

**Theo Mayer:** Katherine, you had mentioned to me that this really was truly one of the first major modern battles. Why did you say that?

[0:04:18]

**Katherine Akey:** Most because of the inclusion of many of the branches of the military. You have the largest ever assembly of aircraft supporting the ground troops which was some 1,500 aircraft. Very many of them were Americans. Some 40% are American flown planes in American Units. The rest are British, French, and Italian. There's also nine bomber squadrons although those were not specifically under Pershing's operational control, they were provided for the battle as well so you have tons of aircraft and then you also have lots and lots of tanks despite it being terrible weather conditions, it had been raining for the day before, heavy driving wind. It was extremely muddy. The men were knee deep and mud in water, and that of course proved very difficult for the tanks. When you picture in your mind infantry troops moving forward with tanks, with planes flying overhead providing cover, it rings like a World War Two battle but these are still World War One technologies. They're still early tanks, early planes and this is one of the first times that they're being used altogether in these numbers.

[0:05:30]

**Theo Mayer:** Now, Ed, you'd mentioned that there are some names that come to light here that we normally associate with World War Two but they really appear at this battle.

[0:05:39]

**Edward Lengel:** There's a whole list of names it could give. Billy Mitchell is the officer who coordinates American Air Forces in Saint-Mihiel will also do that in the Meuse-Argonne. He will become famous after the war for expressing his views on the dominance of air power over all other branches of the service that will have a huge impact on American military history. Then you have folks who are better known in World War Two such as George Patton, Douglas MacArthur, Mark Clark, Harry Truman and many others who will get their first taste of combat this month.

[0:06:19]

**Theo Mayer:** Ed, as we continue on, and maybe the both of you can explain this, there's a line called the Hindenburg Line and late this month the Allies start to encroach on it and actually surpass it. What was the Hindenburg Line?

[0:06:33]

**Edward Lengel:** American forces are going to take part in the assault on the Hindenburg Line and the Meuse-Argonne offensive later in the month. The Hindenburg Line exists in multiple stages, multiple installments along the Western Front. It marks the boundary between Germany being on the offensive west of the Hindenburg Line and to France and Germany being on the defensive east of the Hindenburg Line. The Hindenburg Line is designed to protect the German homeland to slow down any Allied assault to the East and to inflict maximum casualties. It's not a major military fortification along the scale of the Maginot Line later on but it is a significant defensive line with pillboxes, earthworks, trenches, artillery machineguns and all the rest. It marks an important boundary.

[0:07:32]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, Katherine, it's also an important psychological line, isn't it?

[0:07:36]

**Katherine Akey:** Oh, very much. I think it's highly symbolic. The Allied troops are pushing back in dozens of battles this month. The Australians, the New Zealanders, the Canadians, the French, everybody is involved in small little battles all along the Western Front, and they're pushing the German's back to and beyond the Hindenburg Line, I think having not only being pushed back that far and losing that territory to the Germans. Some places have held for years but being pushed back to this line that was their backup, it's their last resort line. It's their last super prepared defensive position. They must be very demoralizing.

[0:08:18]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, at the big battle that we get through at the end of the month is the Meuse-Argonne and really this month we only hit phase one of the battle or the first phase but it's really significant.

[0:08:30]

**Edward Lengel:** Again, as part of Foch's grand plan for attacking the Hindenburg Line from multiple concentric points, it has an important strategic objective which is to capture a railway junction at a place called [Messier] that feeds much of the German territory on the Western Front. What this symbolizes is that we are making some very important strategic decisions at this point. After the battle of Saint-Mihiel on September 12th to 15th which is very important battle. It clears a major German held salient south of Verdun. Many American leaders including Pershing and Douglas MacArthur believed that the American forces should simply continue to the East toward the town of [Mets] and attack in to Germany. Instead, Foch convinces the Americans to shift their forces from Saint-Mihiel to the north to Meuse-Argonne region. George C. Marshall who is another figure, who will become better known in World War Two and beyond is the officer who's put in charge of managing this huge logistical shift of troops from Saint-Mihiel to the Meuse-Argonne and then you'll have nine full American divisions followed by several more American division, again, ultimately over a million troops attacking into a very a forbidding terrain that is [inaudible], waterlogged. There are ravines, there are forests. It's very easily defensible terrain and it's held by German troops who are determined to fight to the finish. The Germans are not trading territory for time in the Meuse-Argonne. They're intending to stop the Americans cold, and the casualties that we suffer in the first few days verge on the catastrophic. It's a major wake-up call for the United States.

[0:10:34]

**Theo Mayer:** That's all of the stuff that's going on the Western Front but there is also some very interesting action that's going on way up North in Siberia.

[0:10:43]

**Edward Lengel:** Yes. American troops land in Vladivostok in the far east of Siberia on September 1st and then a few days later they land in Arkhangelsk in North Russia. These are troops at the regimental level. They're in the hundreds rather than the tens or hundreds of thousands but it's a significance strategic commitment for us to place troops on the periphery of this gigantic country of Russia with the hopes of intervening in the Russian Civil War assisting the White Russians and somehow defeating the Red Russians. It's an odd undertaking but it's going to have at least for the American troops who are committed there along some British and French troops. A terrible demoralizing effect. They have to stay there until 1920 before they're finally withdrawn and they have to watch their comrades who are deployed on the Western Front and elsewhere get to go home in 1919 while they stay in Russia. Not a fun experience for them.

[0:11:51]

**Theo Mayer:** Katherine, there's a lot of stuff going on in the Middle East and in the Balkans and so forth. What's happening there?

[0:11:59]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah. There's a lot of action in September and there's a lot of French that pretty much starts to shut down mostly in favor of the Allied Forces. In the Balkans, there's this Vardar Offensive being fought between an Allied Force that's made up of Serbians, French and Greek too troops. Some Italians fighting against Bulgarian held trenches and territories in present day Macedonia. This offensive is extremely effective, the offensive by the Allies against the Bulgarians. There's mass Bulgarian desertions and then eventually the Bulgarians actually sign an armistice with the Allies on September 29th at the end of this month. Then the Allies are able to capture more major territory in modern day Macedonia and effectively shut down this Balkan front. All of this fighting in the Balkans is a result of the Austro-Hungarian empire losing control of its territory and the dozens of different ethnic and religious groups that made up its constituency before it started to fall apart over course of the war.

[0:13:08]

**Theo Mayer:** What's happening the Ottomans?

[0:13:10]

**Katherine Akey:** Well, big news out in the Middle East. The Battle of Megiddo, a series of a number of attacks and smaller battles against Ottoman forces by both the British and the Egyptian expeditionary force, a subsidiary of the British. This is along with the Arab uprising and TE Lawrence. They managed to take a massive amount of territory from the Ottomans stretching from the Mediterranean coast all the way to the Judean mountains. This also is part of the Middle Eastern front that gets pretty much shut down and left in the hands of the Allies by the end of the month. The last one I would mention is in modern day Azerbaijan. There's a port city Baku on the Caspian Sea that had been under the control of a very short-lived dictatorship, the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship and a combine Ottoman and Azerbaijani force recaptures this port city. Once they do, there's a very large refugee and civilian population in that city. A lot of whom are Armenians and many of them are massacred. Some 30,000 of them are massacred once when the Ottomans regain control of this port city.

[0:14:22]

**Theo Mayer:** Let me take this as an opportunity to switch subjects slightly to the war in the sky and the war on the sea really combining this month. What's that story?

[0:14:32]

**Katherine Akey:** The British produced on September 14th the first official aircraft carrier, the HMS Argus. This is considered the first contemporary aircraft carrier because it has an unobstructed flight deck, the whole length of the ship. In fact, some 10 days after it's first launched on the 24th of September, a British fighter pilot managed us to complete the first true aircraft carrier landing in history. He lands a Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutter on the bare steel flight deck of this contemporary aircraft carrier. It doesn't quite look like the air craft carriers we know from World War Two and it's not nearly as large but it is a huge step forward along with the kind of fighting we're seeing in Saint-Mihiel this month towards the technology and the all arms, all different branches of the military combined warfare that we get in World War Two.

[0:15:26]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, for our listeners who may not know, they had been launching airplanes into the air with catapults off of ships but mostly those were pontoon airplanes and then they would land on the water and be hold back aboard the ship so this is a big change to an actual aircraft carrier?

[0:15:43]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah. It's a huge change. These are not marine planes being launched and then pulled back out of the ocean, they are true aircraft being landed on the deck of the ship.

[0:15:54]

**Theo Mayer:** There is a lot going on, on the domestic front in the US at this point as well, isn't there?

[0:16:00]

**Edward Lengel:** Yes. September first of all is a very important month in African-American history. If you stay on the Western Front, African-American troops enter into combat on a very large scale for the first time with the 92nd and 93rd division troops entering into combat in around the Meuse-Argonne. Back home in the United States, the final stage in what has been a sad and tragic event takes place in early September when several black soldiers who had participated in the Camp Logan riots in Houston of 1917 are hanged at the beginning of September. They have been found guilty and are executed for their alleged participation in these race riots which were really sparked by mistreatment of African-American troops who are assigned to Houston in the era of Jim Crow and segregation. The clash with local whites and the local police department and eventually erupt in a large riot. Again, that's a very tragic episode. On the brighter side, at the end of September and September 30th, President Woodrow-Wilson comes out officially to endorse women suffrage which is a big deal for him because he had before many years actively opposed women suffrage as a federal suffrage as a federal law and then passively opposed and dealt with the demonstrators in front of the white house for quite some time so now we're going to move toward eventual women suffrage on the federal level.

[0:17:42]

**Katherine Akey:** It's worth mentioning, a bill for women's suffrage does make it to the senate this month but it doesn't get the votes that it needs to pass so they're making progress but slow and steady.

[0:17:54]

**Theo Mayer:** Then wrapping things up, I wanna touch just for a moment on the other battle that's going on and that's a battle for health and the Spanish flu. It's resurging this month, isn't it?

[0:18:05]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah. The Spanish flu is about to go into its largest peak over the course of its reign so to speak. We have this peak in the Spanish flu back in the late spring, early summer but here in the fall starting at the end of September and going especially into October and November, we're gonna go from five deaths per thousand people to 25 deaths per thousand people. There's some interesting statistics on who exactly is getting knocked out by this flu. When you look at charts of who the flu killed in 1917, it's mostly children under 4 and people over 75 but then when you see charts of people dying from the flu in 1918, you get this spike right in the middle of that chart which covers individuals aged 20 to 45 basically fighting aged men and women. We're about to go into this period where not only are five times the number of people about to die from this flu as had been back when it first struck earlier in the year but we're also seeing it hitting healthy prime of your life men and women in their 20s and 30s.

[0:19:19]

**Theo Mayer:** Ed, did the flu affect the fighting front directly?

[0:19:22]

**Edward Lengel:** Yes, it did. It first of all impacted the German army, really sapped their frontline strength. That's something that's going on as early as the beginning of the summer and as you move in to the fall, it's going to have a really terrible effect on the Germans as well as Austro-Hungarians and others but it's spreading now of course into the Allied camp and the Americans, French, the British are all dealing with the flu as well. It wears down all of the combatants and has affect on the fighting.

[0:19:54]

**Theo Mayer:** This is not a great march to victory. This is a pretty rough time?

[0:19:59]

**Edward Lengel:** Yeah. We tend by hindsight to look back on this period and I'll mention that as an aside. We almost have the same view about the end of World War Two as if this is a period when we're celebrating and flags are waving and trumpets are blowing and we're all marching toward the inevitable victory and everybody is happy. In fact, this is a time of great fear and uncertainty as well as tragedy. People everywhere across the globe are worried and fearful about how this war is going to end, what's going to happen next, so it's a time of great tension.

[0:20:40]

**Theo Mayer:** As we mentioned during the roundtable, the turmoil in Russia is anything if not confusing and the Allies try to respond. Remember that only a few short years ago, Russia joined the ally against the Germans but that was several governments ago. For an overview, we turn to Mike Schuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for the

Great War Project Blog. Mike, your post this week addresses the turmoil in Russia and how the Allies are just trying to deal with it. It seems pretty darn chaotic.

**[0:21:14]**

**Mike Schuster:** Confusing for certain, Theo. The headline reads: Wilson Sends Troops to Wild Siberia. 5,000 American Soldiers to Russia's Frigid Climes, But Who's the Enemy? Who a Friend? Special to The Great War Project. Americans are fighting aggressively to liberate France and Belgium, but let's back up just a bit: At the same time, they have their sights set on another target, Siberia. In summer 1918, the citizens of Vladivostok find themselves, "Under yet another new administration, the Allied powers," reports historian Gary Mead. "Copies of a proclamation were pasted up around the city informing its inhabitants that as the activities of Austro-German agents were threatening calm and peaceful business, they were now under the provisional "protection" of the Allied powers." The proclamation is signed by the occupying powers: Czech, French, British, Japanese, and reports historian Mead, an Admiral Knight of the United States Navy. "Thus began," writes Mead, "one of the more bizarre episodes of the First World War. The opening round of Allied intervention in the internal affairs of Russia. None of the Allied powers who took this high-handed act," reports Mead, "emerged from it with any glory. Some, including the United States, thrashed about with little or no idea as to what they were even trying to achieve. The best that can be said about the doughboy contingent sent to various parts of Siberia: A witch's cauldron of blood, politics, pillaging and intrigue as part of this Allied intervention is that it abused its power rather less than any of the other participants" Mead writes: "As many as 15,000 American soldiers were at different times during 1918 and beyond part of this de facto army of occupation, spread out across some 4,000 miles of north and east Russia at the height of the early days of the Russian Revolution." In Mead's view, "President Wilson's decision to join this expedition was one of the most ill-judged moves, and cast a pall over US-Russian relations for many years to come. As always it was much easier to send troops in than it was to get them out. This particular policing adventure left an extremely bitter taste in the mouths of many Americans back home" As a result of the revolution, Russia was no longer a reliable ally, especially after Lenin and the Bolsheviks took their nation out of the war. The Allies, including President Wilson felt free to manipulate Petrograd given its now non-belligerent status. "Most of the doughboys who went to Russia survived," reports historian Mead, but many were traumatized by the climate, the living conditions, and the almost complete inability to tell who was the enemy and who a friend." Wilson is blithely sending an initial 5,000 doughboys most of them without winter clothing, and without any real notion of what they were supposed to do in Vladivostok, Murmansk in the frigid north of Russia, and in Omsk in the heart of Siberia, among other points north and east. Among other points north and east. These Americans were soon to find themselves, according to historian Mead, "confronting some of the most barbarous bandits of the day. That's the news from the Great War Project for this week a century ago in the Great War.

**[0:24:28]**

**Theo Mayer:** Mike Schuster is the curator for the Great War Project Blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. That's this week's look back a century ago. Now, let's fast forward into the present with World War One Centennial News Now. This part of the podcast focuses on Now and how the centennial of World War One and the upcoming centennial of the armistice are being commemorated. This week in Commission News. The planning continues for the ACE Initiative. The armistice centennial events in Washington DC as well as the push to support local armistice events with the YourACE Initiative. Here's some quick updates. We're gonna be streaming the secret service from Washington National Cathedral both to our website and to the Bells of Peace app starting at 10:00 am November 11th. The schedule of events for what will be happening in Washington DC at the site of the future National World War One Memorial will be published in just over a week. Standby. Over 12 gubernatorial proclamations are in or in progress for the National Bells of Peace bell tolling and around 200 organizations have signed up to participate. Our developers gave me a first live look at our bell tolling app this week, and I'll have a prototype on my phone next week. I can't wait. It's actually a pretty cool app. We launched our World War One Armistice Film Festival this week and even with a holiday, Rhode Island, Washington State, Pennsylvania, Hawaii, and Washington DC are all onboard with the film festival and our promotion is just getting started. We're hearing about amazing events being planned all around the country so if you have an armistice commemoration or a memorial rededication event planned for 11/11. Please, get it posted on the National Events Register at [www.1cc.org/events](http://www.1cc.org/events) or tweet us for a link request on our podcast Twitter channel @theww1podcast. That's at T-H-E, WW, the number one podcast. Follow the links to the podcast notes for all the YourACE programs. This week for our updates from the states. We're headed to the garden state New Jersey. Joining us to tell us about the New Jersey World War One Centennial Committee, its origins, its projects and programs for the last few years and it's plans beyond the armistice are Sarah Cureton, executive director of the New Jersey Historical Commission and Veronica Calder, archivist at the New Jersey State Archives. Sarah, Veronica, it's great to have you in the show.

**[0:27:27]**

**Sarah Cureton:** Good to be here.

**[0:27:28]**

**Veronica Calder:** Thank you for having us.

**[0:27:29]**

**Theo Mayer:** We started working together and talking to each other several years ago when you came in to the New Jersey Centennial Commemoration process. You're both with the New Jersey government in an organization. How did New Jersey World War One Commemoration come about? How are the efforts structured?

**[0:27:47]**

**Sarah Cureton:** Well, this is Sarah and the agency I work with is the New Jersey Historical Commission and we are the state agency in New Jersey that is charged with organizing programs for major historical anniversaries so this was a natural for us to get involved with. We then turned to our wonderful partners around the state and they happily came onboard to be quickly joined by the New Jersey State Archives, the New Jersey State Museum, the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office, Rutgers University Libraries and Special Collections and the New Jersey National Guard Militia Museum. We quickly formed a planning committee but then one of the great benefits we have here at the historical commission is that we have a grant program and through the grant program, we were able to provide funding to historical organizations all around the state to do their own World War One project.

**[0:28:42]**

**Theo Mayer:** That's great. Well, the state and its role in World War One was huge. You were full of industrial and agricultural production. You had training camps, you had ports. How would you summarize the state's role in World War One?

**[0:28:54]**

**Sarah Cureton:** [inaudible] was doing that right there. I think if we took one word to describe New Jersey's role, location is probably the critical word here. New Jersey's history is marked by many, many experiences and themes that do relate to our location on the eastern sea board right in between New York and Pennsylvania, and because of that, New Jersey already had tremendous industrial infrastructure in place when World War One started. Companies like Johnson & Johnson which during World War One provided medical supplies. Actually, New Jersey companies were beginning to provide supplies to the European Allies long before the US entered the war. In fact by 1918, New Jersey was actually the largest supplier of munitions in America. Finally, I should add that New Jersey also provided significant numbers of troops to the war effort. Over 140,000 New Jerseyans served over the course of the war and we can boast that at least 80 congressional medals on our winners and arguably certainly one of the most famous Americans to serve and to die during World War One was New Jersey's own Joyce Kilmer.

**[0:30:10]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, I wanted to give you guys a shout out in what you did in uncovering your local World War One memorials as well. You're one of the first publishing partners for the commission that really did a fairly detailed survey of where all your World War One memorials were and how did that come about?

**[0:30:26]**

**Sarah Cureton:** We have to give tremendous credit to our partners over at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. As I mentioned they became part of the team very, very quickly and they kept right up and took that particular project on. We've located through their good work about 200 sites in New Jersey that have a World War One connection. Many of them of course are memorial sites and we really will continue to promote that resource to schools and community groups in the years to come as focal points for future Veterans Day programming activities.

**[0:31:04]**

**Theo Mayer:** What are your plans for the armistice?

**[0:31:06]**

**Sarah Cureton:** Well, our governor will be issuing a proclamation calling upon New Jerseyans to participate in the Bells of Peace bell ringing on Armistice Day, and we have a wonderful relationship with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs here in New Jersey and we are in the process of working with them to plan in their special aspects to their annual Veterans Day service and incorporating bell ringing into the ceremony as part of the Bells of Peace program, so we're excited about that.

**[0:31:38]**

**Veronica Calder:** Yeah. The State Archives is currently digitizing all their unofficial service records. There are no original copies of the service records. We only have microfilm copies so there is no archival quality image or anything of them, so we're currently digitizing them. It's taking a long time as there is over 140,000 of them. Then we're hoping to do a crowdsourcing project to allow the public to help us get the data element which is name, location, residence, place of birth into a database that will be accessible through our website.

**[0:32:11]**

**Theo Mayer:** That's a great project. As the audience may or may not know, in 1973 a fire destroyed 18 million veteran records so reconstituting that is really awesome. Okay. Are there plans to keep the Centennial Committee going post the Armistice into 19 and 20?

**[0:32:30]**

**Sarah Cureton:** Luckily here in New Jersey, that group of partner works together on an ongoing basis so we certainly will continue to look for projects that will continue beyond there.

**[0:32:41]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, New Jersey is very unusual in how you got structured and how you're collaborating with each other. Fantastic work. Thank you.

**[0:32:49]**

**Sarah Cureton:** Thank you.

**[0:32:50]**

**Veronica Calder:** Thank you.

**[0:32:50]**

**Theo Mayer:** Sarah Cureton and Veronica Calder from the New Jersey World War One Centennial Committee. Learn more about the committee and its projects and programs by visiting the links of the podcast notes. The NFL season got underway this past weekend, so we thought this would be a great week to look at football in World War One. For our Spotlight on the Media segment, we're joined by author of a book about World War One in football. Doug Bigelow is the author of Gridiron on the Great Lake: The 1918 Fort Ontario Army Football Team. Now, for football fans, this is a look into what is perhaps an unknown era of the game and of course also how Americans and American sports manage to adjust during World War One. Welcome, Doug.

**[0:33:38]**

**Doug Bigelow:** Thanks for having me on, Theo.

**[0:33:40]**

**Theo Mayer:** Doug, at this point in 1918, how old, and how popular, and how well-known is football as a sport and how does it compare to baseball as the national focus?

**[0:33:50]**

**Doug Bigelow:** The first football game, if you wanna call it football game was between Rutgers and Princeton in 1869. That was more like a combination of rugby and soccer. All over the years it morphed and changed with many rule changes. The 1918 version was very similar to the current game. In those days, baseball was the number one sport. There were a lot of other sports tried to be number two. College football was pretty popular. Professional football was looked down upon a little bit. Very, very few players went from the college ranks to play professional football at that time.

**[0:34:25]**

**Theo Mayer:** The NFL comes along in 1920 so that's got to be connected to the boys coming home and it was right post-Armistice and everybody returning.

**[0:34:33]**

**Doug Bigelow:** Yeah. That's one of the major factors in the NFL getting started in 1920. Football was in the military very heavily. Thousands of men from professional ranks and college ranks continue their carriers both stateside and over in Europe. After World War One finished, we kept the troops around for well into 1919 and football was one of the big things that they had over there that kept them occupied. Those boys came home. Now, there are a lot, let's say unemployed football players but guys who wanted to continue playing football and so that's one of the major factors how the NFL got started. I mean, George Halas played in the military during World War One. In fact a lot of the founding fathers did.

**[0:35:13]**

**Theo Mayer:** If you were to sum up football during World War One, what would be the single phrase that you would use?

**[0:35:20]**

**Doug Bigelow:** It was an aggressive game. It was a brutal game because it really took your life in your hands when you play football and at the time soldiers were used to playing rough. They actually thought that football was a good experience for soldiers. It taught them how to throw a ball which they said transferred into how to throw grenades and how to get beat up and survive. They thought football was probably one of the best training exercises for a military man [inaudible] .

**[0:35:45]**

**Theo Mayer:** Okay. In those early days, tell us about Fort Ontario where this football team was located. Where is it and what kind of things were going on there?

**[0:35:53]**

**Doug Bigelow:** Fort Ontario is located in Oswego, New York which is about 30 miles north of Syracuse. It's right on the shores of the great lake. The fort has been around since the mid-1700. It's gone through various stages. It was converted into a general hospital for the military. By the end of the war, there were some thousand staff at the fort and during the 18 months of operation it treated over 8,000 patients. During that time, it was important to supply the soldiers with activities to keep them from less desired pursuit. All sports were highly promoted. The fort had also baseball, basketball and boxing. Fort's football season was drastically altered by the influenza epidemic during the late September of 1918 and well up to early November. The fort treated not only soldiers but civilians during that time frame. The season was delayed by at least five weeks. The team only ended up playing a five-game schedule but they were a dominant team. They beat everybody and they beat everybody [inaudible] .

**[0:36:53]**

**Theo Mayer:** Now, that we've got you on as an expert, you'd mentioned something earlier in the interview about a lot of the people who founded the NFL played football while they were in the service. Can you tell us a little more about that?

**[0:37:04]**

**Doug Bigelow:** George Halas was a big one. I mean, he played, I believed was University of Illinois. One of the main in the Great Lakes Naval Station team which won military championship at the end of 1918 season [inaudible] marines in California. Actually, that was in the Rose Bowl. The 1917 and 1918 Rose Bowl were actually military teams because the military teams in the country generally were better than the college students at the time and Halas after that he went on to found Chicago Stanley which converted into the Chicago bears. He brought in a lot of ex-military buddies, and I know a lot of the other teams also had veterans. None from the fort's roster that I know of played professional football after the war was over.

**[0:37:46]**

**Theo Mayer:** That's interesting. I didn't know that the Rose Bowl went back that far.

**[0:37:50]**

**Doug Bigelow:** Rose Bowl went back to, I think was 1906 or something like that but they only did one game and then they shelved it because of poor attendance and so I believe 1915, it started back up.

**[0:38:02]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, that's a great place to leave the interview. Thank you, Doug.

**[0:38:05]**

**Doug Bigelow:** All right. Thank you.

**[0:38:06]**

**Theo Mayer:** Doug Bigelow is a freelance writer and the author of the book Gridiron on the Great Lake: The 1918 Fort Ontario Army Football Team. Learn more about the book and his research by following the links of the podcast notes. Moving on to our 100 Cities/100 Memorials segment about the \$200,000 matching grant challenge to rescue and focus on local World War One Memorials. This week, we're headed to Caswell Beach, North Carolina. Here to tell us about the project are Ron and Dr. Norma Eckart speaking for the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range. Welcome to the podcast.

**[0:38:46]**

**Ron Eckart:** Well, thank you very much and we are very, very honored to be selected long with the NC State Bell Tower and we thank you Theo and Katherine for this occasion.

**[0:38:58]**

**Theo Mayer:** Kind words. Thank you very much. I remember first seeing your grant application when it came through and your project was really different because you weren't a memorial per se, you were a preservation project for a firing range in the middle of what today, I think is an urban development. Can you tell us a bit about the project?

**[0:39:17]**

**Ron Eckart:** Oak Island is a 13-mile barrier island along the Atlantic Ocean and Caswell Beach is on the eastern three miles of the barrier island right at the mouth of Cape Fear River. The permanent population is 398. In the summer, the tourists come and we have 2,000 people. The new rifle range that we wanna talk about was built the build-up for World War One. The existing rifle range within Fort Caswell had become too dangerous to continue as new troop facilities crowded the range. The project was quickly funded and finished by May 1918. After World War One, the land that contained the fort was sold and the remaining land was abandoned until the 1980s when in a golf course in Caswell Dunes residential community was began. We're very fortunate that the developers saved the rifle range from the bulldozer.

**[0:40:19]**

**Theo Mayer:** I was gonna ask you, how did that happen?

**[0:40:21]**

**Ron Eckart:** Well, according to an early resident of Caswell Dunes, he said, they looked at the structure and said, "Wait a minute. I can't bulldoze this. I need to talk to somebody." They talked to the authorities, whoever they might be. We don't have that history and the authorities said, "No, you can't bulldoze that." They saved it for us and we're so excited. It's 100 years old and it needs a lot of TLC.

**[0:40:50]**

**Theo Mayer:** It's amazing looking. You created something called the Friends of the Fort Caswell Rifle Range. Who are you and what are your goals?

**[0:40:58]**

**Norma Eckart:** Well, the Friends of the Fort Caswell, it was recommended that we developed a nonprofit organization and so when we first looked at this structure, we were volunteers landscaping committee working on the common places within our development and it was a mess. You can imagine after 100 years and so we decided to look into it and find out exactly what it was. We called one of the local historians from Brunswick Town, Fort Anderson and they came and looked at it as well as the State Historic Preservation Office up in Raleigh, North Carolina. They advised us on what to do to get started and then we began to look at getting this site on the Register of Historic Places. The whole community jumped in and helped and that's how we began back in 2011.

**[0:42:00]**

**Theo Mayer:** What stage is the project at or what have you done and what are you still gonna do?

**[0:42:04]**

**Norma Eckart:** We have temporary stabilization going on. We did the engineering study, we were told what to do and we had 17 trees removed and they're trying to use hydraulic jacks to move the middle wall that the troops walked through to get to the target range and you think about it. A hundred years since of having nothing done to it, it was needy but it still was one of the best conditions in the nation but we thought that this structure needs to be the memorial itself. We can get it to where we can educate to see what was done 100 years ago.

**[0:42:46]**

**Theo Mayer:** Now, at one point your organization did a whole bunch of research on the local folks that served. Tell us a bit about that?

**[0:42:54]**

**Ron Eckart:** That is evolving and because all of a sudden we decided maybe we ought to do a little bit with the people that trained here and our daughter has a master's degree in computer science et cetera, et cetera. She put together a website for us and she found all the residents of Brunswick County that had served during WW1 and she's doing profiles and we're going to put a lot of those names on the [inaudible] that we're getting ready to install in November.

**[0:43:30]**

**Norma Eckart:** This research produced so far 724 men and women that served in World War One and France. 40 profiles so far posted on our website. We're hoping to publish a book in 2019 with all these profiles that has been produced.

[0:43:51]

**Theo Mayer:** World War One is a story about people and I just think you folks are brilliant. Thank you so much for doing the project.

[0:43:57]

**Ron Eckart:** Thank you very much. Your recognition makes it all worthwhile.

[0:44:01]

**Norma Eckart:** Thank you.

[0:44:02]

**Theo Mayer:** Ron and Dr. Norma Eckart are from the Friends of the Fort Caswell Rifle Range in Caswell, North Carolina. Learn more about the 100 Cities/100 Memorials program and the rifle range by following the links in the podcast notes. This week in World War One War Tech, we touch back on something that came up in our roundtable. A technological advancement that we mostly associate with World War Two but like so many things, it's got its roots in World War One. In the Pacific Theater of World War Two, the aircraft carrier was the defining naval weapon. The carrier possesses the ability to project your combat forces into theaters of conflict in ways that outstrip even the mightiest of battleships. Just think of Pearl Harbor. A strike delivered by air craft carrier and that could have knocked out the US Pacific fleet instead of just really hurting it except for one factor. The Japanese failed to knock out the air craft carriers so scarcely six months later, a carrier led American force, defeated the Japanese Navy at the battle of Midway turning the tide of the Pacific War, and like so many other technologies that have a massive impact on World War Two, a quarter of a century earlier the air craft carrier made its debut during World War One. In September of 1918, the British completed the conversion of an Italian liner into the first fully operational aircraft carrier, the HMS Argus. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the completed Argus had an unobstructed 560-foot runway and a hangar with enough room for 20 airplanes. Now, what separated the Argus from previous plane hosting ships was that the planes could not only takeoff from the Argus but return to her instead of landing in the sea. This distinguishes the Argus as the first truly modern aircraft carrier. The Argus debuted too late in the war to see combat but her significance wasn't lost on the other powers. In the inner war period, both the United States and Japan constructed their own carriers foreshadowing the epic naval clashes that were to follow in the Pacific and the aircraft carrier is still a dominant weapon for projecting global power today. A few years back, the navy ran an ad showing a large aircraft carrier steaming towards the viewer with a simple headline that read 90,000 Tons of Diplomacy. The aircraft carrier, another example of a key technology that has its roots in the war that changed the world. Check the links in the podcast notes to learn more. For this week's Speaking World War One where we examine the words and phrases from the war. This week, the term is D-Day. Wait a minute. Have we really completely fallen at World War Two this week? No, we haven't. Though the term D-Day was immortalized when American, British, and Canadian forces stormed the beaches of Normandy and began the liberation of Western Europe on June 6th, 1944. It's actually not the first D-Day for the American Forces. The US Army Center for Military History has this to say about the word D-Day, "Planning papers for a large scale operations are made up in detail long before the specific dates are set, thus orders are issued for the various steps to be carried out on the D-Day or H-Hour minus or plus, certain numbers of days, hours and minutes. At the appropriate time a subsequent order is issued that states the actual day and time." It's an official military practice to label the date of an operation D-Day before the specific date of the operation is determined. By early September 1918 in World War One, the Allies had decisively seized the initiative on the Western Front from Germany. At the same time, General John J. Pershing had achieved his goal of amassing a full-fledged American army, the US First Army with over 500,000 men was ready to take on the Germans as the primary force in a large offensive. The objective was to drive the Germans from the Saint-Mihiel salient, a 50-mile [inaudible] in the Allied line. Pershing drew up plans to hit the salient from multiple directions, exploiting the exposed German flanks. On September 7th, 1918, the First Army received field order number nine, "The First Army will attack at H-Hour on D-Day. The object of forcing the evacuation of the Saint-Mihiel salient." This was the first known use of the term D-Day to describe the undetermined commencement date of a major military operation. On September 12th, the First Army went over the top and by the 16th, the salient had been completely conquered by the Allies. The term became a staple of American military vocabulary used to describe the launch date for all US amphibious landings during World War Two from Sicily to the Pacific. One of the most famous bits of technical military language first used in World War One and this week's phrase for speaking World War One, D-Day. Check out the links in the podcast notes to learn more. In Articles and Post where we highlight the stories you'll find in our weekly newsletter, The Dispatch. Headline: Sculptor Sabin Howard Shares New National World War One Memorial Design on YouTube's Tested Series. Sabin Howard, sculptor of the New National World War One Memorial in Washington DC is featured in a new episode of YouTube's four million subscriber hit series, Tested, hosted by Adam Savage, former co-host and co-creator of cable TV's MythBusters. As of this writing, Adam's report on Sabin's work had gotten 41,000 plays, 1,600 likes and a spirited 260-comment conversation. Headline: Rhode Island National Guard Wreath Ceremony Honors Their World War One Soldiers. Members of the Rhode Island National Guard memorialized their predecessor's service and sacrifice by laying a wreath last week at the World War One monument. The article outlines the World War One activities of Rhode Island's First Battalion 103rd Artillery. Headline: Remembering the World War One Service of

Admiral John Slew McCain. Last week, our nation mourned the loss and celebrated the life of Senator John McCain. This article traces the senator and his family's legacy of service that reaches into World War One. Finally, our selection from our official World War One Centennial merchandise shop. Our featured item this week is our World War One custom silk tie. This 100% woven red silk tie has been custom created for the World War One Centennial Commission and it features a World War One era aircraft pattern and the official logo of the centennial commission the back. Links to our merchandise shop and all the articles, we've highlighted here are in the weekly dispatch newsletter. Subscribe at [www1cc.org/subscribe](http://www1cc.org/subscribe). You can also send a link request for the tweet to the podcast Twitter channel @theww1podcast or following the links in the podcast notes. And that brings us to The Buzz, the centennial of World War One this week in social media with Katherine Akey. Katherine, what posts did you pick this week?

**[0:51:56]**

**Katherine Akey:** Hi, Theo. Irish Central, an online newspaper recently published an article about the service of Irish-American soldiers during World War One, in particular the graffiti they left behind in underground chambers in France. These soldiers left their marks in the battlefields including graffiti mentioning their Knights of Columbus hall, their local ancient order of Hibernians chapters or their favorite baseball teams, the Red Sox included. You can read more about it in the link in the podcast notes. Additionally this week, the Center for Military History put out another informative and entertaining video about World War One. This particular video covers the building up of the American Army, a massive undertaking that would shape the course of events for the rest of the 20th century. We'll be speaking to the team behind these videos later in the months too. The link is in the podcast notes for you, and that's it this week for The Buzz.

**[0:52:50]**

**Theo Mayer:** And that wraps up episode number 88 of World War One Centennial News. Thank you for listening. We wanna thank our guests, Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian and author; Mike Schuster, curator for the Great War Project Blog; Sarah Cureton and Veronica Calder from the New Jersey State World War One Centennial Committee; Doug Bigelow, freelance writer and author; Ron and Dr. Norma Eckart from the Friends of the Fort Caswell Rifle Range in Caswell, North Carolina; Katherine Akey, World War One photography specialist and line producer for the podcast. Many thanks to Mac Nelson and Tim Crow. Our intrepid sound editing team. To JL Michaud, our researcher and I'm the guy who's proud to be the show's producer and host, I'm Theo Mayer. The US World War One Centennial Commission was created by congress to honor, commemorate and educate about World War One. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War One, that includes this podcast. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators and their classrooms. We're helping to restore World War One memorials in communities of all sizes across the country, and of course we're building America's National World War One Memorial in Washington DC. We wanna thank the commission's founding sponsor, The Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as the Starr Foundation for their support. The podcast and a full transcript to the show can be found on our website at [ww1cc.org/cn](http://ww1cc.org/cn). You'll find World War One Centennial News in all the places you get your podcast and as we told you at the top of the show, even using your smart speaker by saying play WW1 Centennial News Podcast. The podcast Twitter handle is @theww1podcast. The commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc and we're at Facebook at WW1 Centennial. Thank you for joining us and don't forget to share the stories you're hearing here today about the war that changed the world. Thank you for listening. So long.

**[0:55:42]**