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10 speakers (Theo Mayer, Speaker 2, Carol Braun, Dan Dayton, Mike Shuster, Edward Lengel, Libby O'Connell, Hal Chase, Liesl Agan, Speaker 10)

[0:00:08]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to the World War I Centennial News Podcast. It's about then, what was happening 100 years ago in the aftermath of World War I, and it's about now, how the world transformed by World War I is very present in our lives today. But perhaps equally important, the podcast is about why and how we will never let those events fall back into the midst of obscurity. Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 109. This week on the show, we're opening with From a Civil War to a World War and Beyond, including a segment with former ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, and what her grandfather's World War I service meant to her. Mike Shuster reports on Wilson's Push for the Formation of the League of Nations. We have the last installment of the story of Sergeant Roy Holtz, the first American soldiers on the streets of occupied Belgium, and he's riding on a Harley. Then Dr. Edward Lengel talks about the challenge and the neglect of the disabled doughboys coming home. For a century in the making, we're going to continue to explore the National World War I Memorial in Washington D.C. With commissioner Dr. Libby O'Connell as we learn more about the interpretive elements. For remembering veterans, we're going to explore the largely untold story of Fort Des Moines in Iowa and the black officer training camp that was based there, as we're joined by historian Hal Chase. For education, we're joined by Liesl Christman Agan, who'll be on hand to tell us about this month's education e-newsletter and more. All this week on World War I Centennial News, which is brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, the Starr Foundation, the General Motors Foundation, as well as the good people of Walmart. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the commission and your host. Welcome to the show. February is Black History Month. As we look to telling the story of African Americans in World War I, it occurred to us that in order to put it into context, we really needed to go back an additional generation to what is known as the Reconstruction Era. Now this is a period of time in American history that started right after the Civil War and lasted about 10 years to 1877, a time during which constitutional amendments about civil rights, a stronger federal government, and what was meant by the words "United States" was being redefined. Now the reason this matters to World War I is because this is the period when the parents of those who fought in World War I grew up. 1877 is only 40 years before we declared war on Germany. If you were an African American kid of about 25, of drafting age or volunteer age, there's a good chance that your parents were born during this tumultuous reconstruction era. With that as a time reference, let's go back to examine the changes that came at the end of the US Civil War.

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Speaker 2: [inaudible].

[0:03:35]

Theo Mayer: Now we've traveled back to the end of the American Civil War. The confederacy collapses, slavery is abolished, and four million black slaves are freed. During the Reconstruction Era that follows the war, national unity is slowly restored, the federal government expands its power, and civil rights are guaranteed to freed black slaves through amendments to the constitution and federal laws. There's three amendments to the US constitution in this period aimed at ending slavery and pulling the states together. First, the 13th Amendment is passed in the same year the Civil War ends in 1865. It officially abolishes slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishments for a crime, like when you go to prison. Slide forward three years to 1868, and the 14th Amendment grants citizenship to former slaves and to all persons "subject to US jurisdiction". It also sets three new limits on states' powers. First, they can't violate a citizen's privileges or immunities. Second, they can't deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Third, the states have to guarantee that everybody gets equal protection under the law. Slide forward another two years to 1870 and you get the 15th Amendment, which prohibits the use of race, color, or previous condition of servitude in determining whether you can or cannot vote, unless you're a woman. All of this is meant to create uniformity of freedoms to everybody, except women, especially stopping state laws designed to keep shackles on the civil rights and liberties of former slaves. This period of pulling it all together, admittedly with some resentment and a lot of resistance, is called the Reconstruction Period and goes on to 1877, 40 years, just one generation before America hits World War I. That means that grandparents and even parents of young African Americans who decided to fight or were drafted into World War I may very well have lived part of their lives as slaves. That is a set up. Let's bring our perspective back into the present as we hear from one of the commission's special advisors. It's Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun. Ambassador Braun is a pretty amazing person and a multifaceted pioneer. Now, first off, in 1992, she was elected to serve as the only black member of the United States Senate and the first and only woman to be elected to the Senate from the State of Illinois. After that, she served as ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa. Here is special advisor to the commission, Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, followed

by commission Executive Director Dan Dayton, both parts excerpted from a new video the commission produced called A Soldier's Journey. To see the video, search A Soldier's Journey on Vimeo or YouTube.

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Carol Braun: I got a box back of some family pictures, and in the bottom of the box was this picture. It was of my grandfather in a military uniform. I began to get interested and actually passionate about World War I and the history of what it meant, not just for me and my family but what it meant for the community as a whole. My grandfather's name was Thomas Davie. He was a sergeant in the American Expeditionary Forces. My grandfather went off to fight for an idea. He didn't fight for what he was experiencing in his life. He couldn't vote, he couldn't sit on the front of the bus, but he was prepared to go off and fight for democracy and the ideals that built this country and that he invested in. He was prepared to give his life. That, to me, is the definition of patriotism. I mean you don't get any more profound definition of patriotism than somebody who will fight for an idea even in spite of the realities of their current circumstance. He and 300,000 other African Americans did just that. Again, we talk with diversity being strength. Women came out of the home for the first time to be able to participate in the war. African Americans came out of the fields in many cases, Native Americans, in that point, been run off onto reservations, immigrant Americans. They all came together and participated as soldiers, as doughboys in World War I, and the rest of the world was very grateful. The African American soldiers came back from Europe at the end of the war in 1918. They brought back a different sensibility. There are many people who say that it was their intervention or their experiences that planted the seeds for the civil rights movement that blossomed 60 years later. They so believed in the ideals of democracy.

[0:09:07]

Dan Dayton: World War I was the war that changed the world. It changed everything about the interrelationship between countries. It helped to advance our technology. It helped to advance the rights of women and helped to advance the rights of African Americans. It helped bring America out of its shell for the first time. There is an importance to the American Dream. There is an importance to the defense of the democracy of the United States. That's just as important today as it was a hundred years ago, as it was 200-plus years ago. We're charged with trying to help Americans understand that, and to build the National Memorial when there is no World War I Memorial in the nation's capital. We're going to build one.

[0:09:54]

Theo Mayer: The story of African American participation in World War I is both heroic and tragic. As the timeline shows, it was a watershed moment that set the foundation for the civil rights movement. Men and women stepped up to establish the rights and respect for their community and their fellow black citizens and, tragically, often met with resistance, segregation, and blatant racism. But this moment set the rudder of freedom in an unerring direction for the civil rights movement on a long, often painful and difficult journey that's not yet ended, but clearly launched a hundred years ago in the war that changed the world. Shifting our focus to Europe, we're joined by Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for the Great War Project blog. Mike, first of all, thank you for your great overview post of what's happening in Paris and Europe leading up to and through the Peace Conference. It's been said that watching government at work is like watching sausage being made. A lot of ingredients go into the process, and sometimes you don't want to look too closely at what's going on. Now I'd say that's a pretty good summary of what's happening at this mother of all political processes, wouldn't you, Mike?

[0:11:13]

Mike Shuster: Yes. It certainly is a dynamic process. The headlines read: Wilson Fights for a League of Nations, Sees an Essential Part of the Peace Treaty, The Press Sours on the President, He Perseveres Nevertheless. This is a special to the Great War Project. Paris is awash with journalists, sent from around the world to cover the peace conference. Increasingly, the press has become hostile to the peace process. Just look at the first of President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points: "Open covenants openly arrived at." So writes historian Thomas Fleming, "Both the press and the American people assumed this meant they would have access to all the details of the peace conference. Wasn't this what Wilson's 'New diplomacy' meant?" "Instead," reports Fleming, "they found themselves barred from all sessions of the Council of Ten," which the Big Five and their foreign ministers," which seldom issued more than five sentences to summarize its doings. This code of silence left the reporters reduced to peering through the doors at the relatively rare plenary council sessions, where little was debated and the lesser delegates were simply asked to ratify the decisions of the major powers." Writes Fleming, "Wilson had seen open covenants as a way to ban secret treaties, such as the pre-war accords signed by the British Foreign Secretary, signed with the French and the Russians, and the mercenary deal that the Allies had cut with the Italians in 1915. Wilson never dreamed people would want to know about the give-and-take of negotiations between foreign ministers and leaders." Observes Fleming, "But the reporters were not interested in the President's clarifications. They called the plenary sessions washouts and started writing about a gag rule that made a mockery of Wilson's idealistic promises." It was the old-style diplomacy in the dark all over again. Wilson did make an effort to remedy the problem. He authorized an American diplomat to speak on his behalf, but it was a matter of too little, too late. Reporters wanted access to Wilson himself, access Wilson declined to provide. He did hold two press conferences in France, but Wilson insisted

everything he said was off the record. Fleming reports, "When two reporters quoted him, he was infuriated and he never talked to a news reporter again. The other Allied leaders met regularly with the press of their individual countries." Writes historian Fleming, "The American press contingent, in fact, was eager to support the American position at the peace conference, but only if they knew what it was. It was not surprising then that under this state of affairs they began to lose confidence in American leadership in the conference." "Meanwhile," reports Fleming, "Wilson persevered in his single-minded struggle for the League of Nations, which he saw as the eventual answer to almost every problem facing the conference." On June 25th, he goes before the conference to propose the creation of a special commission to hammer out the structural details of a league. By this time, he has persuaded Clemenceau and Lloyd George of the necessity to create such a league as an essential part of a peace treaty. He names himself as chairman of the commission that will hammer out the details. That's the news these days a century ago from the Great War Project.

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Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster is the curator for the Great War Project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. Next, we have the fifth and final installment of our story about Sergeant Roy Holtz of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, the first US soldier on German soil after the Armistice of World War I, captured on film in occupied Belgium, and he's riding on a Harley Davidson. Our good friend and citizen historian, author Robert Laplander wrote this researched account of the story, what actually happened, intended for high school students. Well, Rob has given us permission to read the story to you in serial form. Here is the unabridged First Into Germany, Sergeant Roy Holtz, And He Did It on a Harley by author Robert Laplander. Chapter five: The story of the picture. Now having gone in the wrong direction and winding up accidentally stumbling into a farmhouse that turned out to be the German headquarters of the Fifth Bavarian Division, Roy and his Captain Sam, now prisoners of war, get back to their Harley, ordered to go to the Town of Spa. Roy mounts up and Captain Sam again takes his place in the sidecar, scowling at the German officers standing next to him, who then mounts the rear luggage carrier above the back wheel behind Roy, and off they go into the rain once again with the German officer yelling directions into Roy's ear. It wasn't too long before the German captain began to complain about the ride on the hard seat behind Roy. Every bump on the road was teeth-jarring for him. But the more the German complained, the harder and faster Roy drove, seeking out every bump and every pothole he could possibly find on the road. By the time they reached Spa, Belgium, the dawn of the ninth of November was lightening up the Belgian countryside. The German officer was in awful shape and the headlights on the Harley had shattered. At the German headquarters, the Americans were both interrogated this time, but neither said anything before being thrown in a jail cell together and left there. It was two days later when someone finally paid attention to them. A guard sauntered over to their cell on that famous morning, the 11th of November, and said that an Armistice had finally been signed. Now if it held at 11:00 a.m., the war would be over and they'd be free to go back across the line to their units without any problem. Now sure enough, just before noon, the guard came back and threw their cell door open with a smile and announced that they were free to go. The war was indeed over. However, according to the date on the picture, the two didn't leave Spa until the next day, when Roy was given back his automatic and was taken to where his Harley Davidson was being stored. It was while he was driving back through the streets of Spa to the jail to pick up his captain that a local Belgian photographer snapped the famous picture of him passing a retreating German supply column and being eyed up and down by the German soldiers. As famous as it would eventually become, he later never ever remembered the photo being taken. Having picked up his captain once again, the two started back to their unit, which, unknown to them, was well over 60 miles away. Roy was pushing his motorcycle hard to get back. Somewhere along the way, he got off the main road and, believe it or not, got lost again. Pulling up at another little Belgian town, they stopped to ask directions of the local priest. Before they knew what was happening, the whole town had turned out to greet them as the liberating heroes. The church bells were ringing joyfully. They were the first Americans that these people had ever seen. The celebration surrounding them went on through the afternoon and well into the evening. That night, the priest put them up in his house. The next day, after having to practically drag themselves away from the excited town folks, and with good directions this time and the sound of bells still ringing their ears, our two doughboys, Roy and Captain Sam, pulled up to the 32nd Division headquarters. They just had time to report and clean up some before the division was on the move again. Corporal Roy Holtz was once again in the advanced reconnaissance element, off into Germany Proper. On November 21st, the 32nd advanced recon unit reached the town of Echternach in Luxembourg on the Sauer River. The river constituted the border with Germany. It was later that day that Corporal Roy Holtz was given a mission to ride across the bridge over the Sauer into Echternacherbrück, Germany, when Roy Holtz did indeed become the first American doughboy on German soil. Although several curious town folks peered through their windows at what would soon become a familiar site, American doughboys, Roy was not molested in any way. After a lookaround, he returned and made his report. Over the next couple of days, Corporal Holtz would ferry several officers over the border to speak with German officials in anticipation of the rest of the 32nd crossing over into Germany, there to begin army of occupation duties. Corporal Holtz, fluent in German as he was, helped out in translating some of these meetings. On the morning of December 1st, the Red Arrow Division crossed the bridge as a whole and, by December 11th, had moved forward to positions for occupation duty along the Rhine River at Koblenz, Germany. Here the Wisconsin and Michigan doughboys, many of whom, like Roy, were of German heritage, found a largely friendly population willing to work with their American cousins for the greater good. The war really was over. Epilogue: Roy Holtz was promoted to

sergeant after the war, remaining with the army of occupation through the spring and into the summer of 1919. He finally returned home to Chippewa Falls on August 9th of that year and was reunited with his family once again. All three brothers had made it through the war, though Ezra would lose a lung to the mustard gas he'd taken in. Despite that, he and Roy became electricians together and formed the Holtz Brothers Electric Company. The company enjoyed much success over the years due to the hard work of the two combat veterans until Ezra died in 1952. Roy died later in 1964. Edward, the only brother who didn't go overseas, became the Chippewa Falls police chief, and he died in 1965. Though the facts have been blurred somewhat over the years, and there has been some confusion as to exactly what constituted Germany in regards to the picture, not of that takes away from Roy Holtz's wonderful and colorful adventure. There's no dispute that Roy was the first to cross the Sauer River onto German soil on November 21st, nor have the actions of Sergeant Holtz and his ride on an iconic American motorcycle been forgotten even a hundred years later, for etched into the granite of Wisconsin's Veterans Tribute at Cadott, Wisconsin, his entry reads: "Sergeant Roy C. Holtz, Chippewa Falls, first US soldier on German soil after the Armistice of World War I, and he did on a Harley Davidson." The end. We want to thank Rob Laplander, author of the book Finding the Lost Battalion and the man behind the Doughboy MIA Project, for allowing us to serialize his rendition of this wonderful story. We have a bunch of fun links for you in the podcast notes. Next, in the Story of Service segment, we have regular contributor to the podcast, historian and author, Dr. Edward Lengel. His blog is called A Storyteller Hiking Through History. This week, Ed takes us into the painful remembrance of what was forgotten as he talks about the struggle of the many wholesome young men who did not return completely whole.

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Edward Lengel: Years after World War I ended, veteran Harry Zander happened across a former comrade walking the streets of his native Atlanta. "Miller," he stammered with tears in his eyes, and took his old friend by the hand. But it turned out to be a painful encounter. "Miller was shabby and worn looking," Zander remembered. "He had not even had a shave in days. His scraggly beard attested to that, and his red hair, too, had lost its luster and was dull and mixed with a lighter shade. Only his eyes were the same, the same haunted, fearful look I remembered so well out there on the battlefield. I knew that for Miller, the hell of war was not ended, that he still lived those days over again, the results of which faced him continually." Zander and his friends had enlisted joyfully in the spring of 1917. He trained at Camp Gordon, Georgia, witnessing the challenges of integrating immigrant soldiers who barely spoke English into the US Army. He also witnessed incidents of savage racism directed toward African American officers, the root cause of race riots that would erupt across the country in the summer of 1919. For a time, Zander had to stand guard over so-called shirkers who had been drafted into service and would do anything to get out. Still, training was, for Zander, a positive experience on the whole, and he hoped that it would give him the tools he needed to face combat on the Western Front. Zander's unit of the Third Division sailed from New York in the spring of 1918. His first hint of the realities of war came in late June, when he encountered some Marines just returned from brutal fighting in Belleau Wood. "Their uniforms were simply filthy," he recalled. "Their beards had grown long and shaggy, and there was a hard, cold look in their eyes. All lines of sympathy and civilization were gone from their faces, and some of the men had a peculiar blank stare in their eyes." Harry Zander's unit encountered combat along the Marne River in mid-July. From there on, it engaged in nearly constant fighting until the end of the war. During one assault in July, he came under fire from enemy artillery firing high explosive and mustard gas. Shells landed so close that a sergeant was killed right next to him as a gas canister made a direct hit. Zander was wearing his gas mask, fortunately, but his uniform was heavily splashed with the liquid chemical, scorching his skin, and he was stunned from a shell concussion. "My entire muscular system seemed to be shaking," he explained. "Aside from this peculiar sensation, I had no other feeling of pain, and I did not care much what happened to me. I did not have enough feeling to be afraid." Hospitalized briefly, he was soon sent back to the lines, where, in August, he was nearly buried alive when an enemy shell landed next to his dugout. None of it compared to what Zander experienced in the Meuse-Argonne. Most of his friends were killed or wounded. Some Zander watched pass away, others he heard about second hand. Although no bullet or shell ever caught him, he was gassed twice until, "My entire lungs felt as though I had swallowed fire," as he remembered. What with that, the constant marching to and fro and the cold, miserable weather, Zander and many of his comrades eventually just ran down until they could hardly function physically. The doctors were reluctant to send men to the hospital except for obvious physical wounds, though, and so Zander remained on duty. The Armistice came as an anticlimax. Months passed before Zander returned home to Georgia. He wasn't on any casualty list; he had no scars, except for gas burns on his torso, and displayed no obvious signs of shell-shock, as post-traumatic stress was called at the time. But his body was no longer strong, and he struggled to overcome powerful feelings of apathy and depression. In theory, every wounded soldier received a disability pension, or "compensation" as it was called at the time. The Soldier's Rehabilitation Act of 1918 established the Federal Board for Vocational Education that helped get veterans, wounded or not, back into the workplace. Soldiers too physically handicapped to work at all received a small boost in their government compensation. The Veterans Bureau was created in 1921 to manage, with other agencies, ongoing medical treatment for the 200,000 veterans officially recognized as wounded. But "officially recognized" was the operative term. Zander reacted angrily in 1933 to the words of a politician who said that "our battle casualties had been most wonderfully taken care of, and all that remained were a few doubtful cases that could not get compensation because they did not have a disability incurred in service". Yet Zander knew from personal experience that thousands of veterans, particularly victims of gas,

disease, and shell-shock, had struggled for years to gain official recognition as war casualties, often without success. Even when one doctor diagnosed a veteran with a gas-related illness, for example, all it took was one dissenting opinion for a soldier's case to be questioned and his compensation cut in half or eliminated. "Medical opinion," Zander wrote, "claims that men gassed, or who have had the Flu, either died or got well, and after one year would not allow compensation." Zander's friend Miller was a case in point. "Harry," he said, "you know since I came back what it has been. I can't establish my claim and the government doctors insist they can't find anything. Yet I cannot hold out on any kind of work." Worse lay ahead as the Great Depression and then World War II distracted the US government and the general public from the needs of America's World War I veterans. Many thousands would die young from war-related illnesses in shelters, flophouses, and small hospitals, their sacrifices unacknowledged and forgotten.

[0:29:34]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Edward Lengel, historian, World War I expert, author and storyteller hiking through history. We have links to Ed's post and his author's website in the podcast notes. Okay, it's time to fast forward into the present with World War I Centennial News Now. As our regular listeners know, this part of the podcast focuses on the present and explores ongoing World War I documentation, commemoration, education, and exploration. Here is where we try to show you how the echoes of the war that changed the world are still very present in our everyday lives. Our weekly segment, A Century in the Making, is where we are offering our listeners a rare insider view of how a national memorial project comes together. This week, we're again joined by Dr. Libby O'Connell, a US World War I Centennial Commissioner, former Chief Historian for the History Channel, and a member of the Memorable Planning Taskforce. Today, Dr. O'Connell gives us some highlights into the planned interpretive elements of the memorial. You can get a visual overview of the entire World War I memorial at ww1cc.org/memorial. Today we begin at the northeast side, near Pennsylvania Avenue, where there's going to be an orientation circle, a low wall with an angled top with information plaques set into it. This is being called the belvedere. Now according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, a belvedere is a structure from which you have a commanding view. That's really true in this case. It's a perfect location to get a great overview of the whole World War I Memorial.

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Libby O'Connell: You walk from Pennsylvania Avenue to the belvedere. On your left will be the Great Man, the General Pershing statue, and that interpretation. Then to your right, you'll see A Soldier's Journey, the sculptural wall, which is a very powerful piece of sculpture. On the other side of that sculpture wall is the Peace Fountain, with the rushing water pouring into a pool of water that actually go around the whole edges of that plaza that we're building right in the middle of the park. On the belvedere, there are plaques. They won't be jampacked with information. They're going to be a few top-line pieces of information about what you're seeing. It'll describe the Great Man, Pershing, and encourage you to go there to take a look. The other one will look at the memorial wall. The third plaque will also show the fountain, because you won't be able to see it. Behind the Soldier's Journey is the Peace Fountain. Also on that wall will be a segment from the sculpture, an actual replica of the piece of the sculpture, so that people who visit the park will be able to touch the bronze, get a sense of its texture. This is for people who are visually impaired, for people who are differently abled, but it's also for all of us who really want to have a tactile sense of what's this like. Another part of the park will hold a 3D map where you can look at the small version of the map as if you were ... What's called the bird's eye view. You can look at it from the top, or a drone's eye view [inaudible] today, and touch it and get a sense of how it was built and how it's framed. A secondary interpretive element is the flagstaff. There'll be a quotation on the brim. You can see the Washington Monument in the distance on the right. It occurs to us this would be a really nice place to have interpretation and educational information about the immigration and the doughboys, and who were the doughboys. One of the things we want the public to know is that our Army in World War I was made up of immigrants. Over 20% were foreign-born or born to families who had just recently arrived, young men from all over the country, very ethnically diverse. There were a lot of immigrants who were members, and they were people who joined to claim citizenship. American Indians fought as doughboys. They were not citizens at the time, but they were dedicated warriors and fought heroically for the American Expeditionary Forces. We also have African Americans who were fighting. They were citizens, but not granted really the full rights of citizenship when you think about it. The Civil Rights Act wouldn't be passed until the 1960s. There were also women who did not fight on the battlefield, but served in uniform. This is an important theme of World War I as well. We're going to be talking about the diversity and citizenship right here. It seems like in the future, we might have naturalization ceremonies in front of the flag. We want to salute the doughboys for their service and their dedication, and all of the people who supported the doughboys as well. We also want to recognize today's veterans and encourage people to learn about citizenship. When you become a citizen in this country, you have to pass a test. You're supposed to know a lot about the history and civics in America. I think we should be challenging all Americans to know that. I see this as a place where people could come and learn about racial groups that join together for this battle. There are also stories of discrimination and prejudice against them, but also people who got a real chance for the first time. It's a complicated story, but it's an interesting one. It has a lot of echoes in America today, and that's one reason why I think it's so important.

[0:35:32]

Theo Mayer: That was Dr. Libby O'Connell about the National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C. This was Part Two, Interpretive Elements. Learn lots more about the memorial and help us build it by going to ww1cc.org/memorial, or follow the link in the podcast notes. Welcome to our segment we call The Historian's Corner. Some weeks ago, I was contacted by a gentleman named Larry Marquardt from the Iowa and Minnesota World War I Centennial Committees. Now Larry started to tell me about a remarkable venue that he thought was fascinating and deserved to have its story told. That location is Fort Des Moines in Iowa. It was a training camp not only for black military officers, but also for African American medical officers. Joining us today to introduce us to the camp, its history, and the officer training program is historian Hal Chase, who was actually born in Des Moines during World War II. Hal got his PhD in American Civilization with an emphasis on African American history from the University of Pennsylvania. Hal, thank you so much for coming in and speaking with our listeners today.

[0:36:48]

Hal Chase: Thanks for having me, Theo.

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Theo Mayer: Hal, to start, what year was the camp set up?

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Hal Chase: June 18th, 1917. Then commissions were awarded on October 15th, 1917.

[0:37:02]

Theo Mayer: Was the camp a segregated camp?

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Hal Chase: Yes. That was a very controversial issue, Theo. In the black press, people took sides and basically said, "If it's not going to be integrated, we don't want to be part of it." But a dominant voice was this was going to be an opportunity to train African American men on a broader scale to be officers. That held out. But I think the bottom line came from John Mitchell, editor and publisher of the Richmond Planet in Richmond, Virginia, who claimed no officers, no fight. That and other pressure, and I think key figures involved General Leonard Wood, who was the commander of the eastern department, he favored such a camp, and Newton D. Baker, secretary of war at the time, was not opposed to it. There was, as people would expect, strong opposition from people in the south, particularly people like James K. Vardaman of Mississippi, who basically made the comment that if these men were trained, it would take a million lynchings to put them back in their place. This was the atmosphere at that time, and these men, there were 1250 at Fort Des Moines, but how it can be, I would say, is, in essence, a political decision was made. The central committee of negro college men that was based at Howard University there in Washington, they had a national network primarily through the African American fraternities. Alpha Phi Alpha was the oldest, Omega Psi Phi, and then Kappa Alpha Psi were the major players in connecting. Those fraternity men came and they stayed in Washington and they, in my opinion, operated the first sit-ins. They would go to their representative or senator's office and there they would sit, generally speaking, all day waiting to have a few words with their representative or senator.

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Theo Mayer: Okay. Well, how many officers did the camp graduate?

[0:39:25]

Hal Chase: 639 men earned commissions from captains to first to second lieutenants, a little more than half of the 1250 candidates. There were about a thousand college men that could have been people in college as well as college graduates, because men were eligible from 21 to 40 in that application. The other statistic there is that most of the men who earned commissions were either first or second lieutenants.

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Theo Mayer: Now did many of those guys deploy to France?

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Hal Chase: Yes. It was rare that you were not deployed. They were deployed with two divisions. The 93rd, which numbered only 10,000 men, way short of a division, they served under French command. The officers from Fort Des Moines, they served under French command. Then the 92nd Division served under Pershing and the AEF. That had 27,000 men. The 93rd was one of the first that went to France.

[0:40:39]

Theo Mayer: About how many officers did deploy?

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Hal Chase: As far as I know, the 639 all deployed to either the 93rd or the 92nd. I do not know of anyone who wasn't deployed. I don't believe that all the officers actually served in France.

[0:40:59]

Theo Mayer: Do you know, when they were in France under French command, was it a layered command structure? Did they leave the black officers in charge of their troops, but then senior officers would be French? Is that how it worked?

[0:41:11]

Hal Chase: Yes, and that was true for the American deployment as well. But the experience, according to the men themselves in the 93rd, was very different than those on the 92nd. The commanding officers from above captains all the way up, they were white. That was a different experience according to the men who wrote about that in their own memoirs.

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Theo Mayer: Hal, what would you say are the two most interesting facts about Camp Des Moines? What should our listeners remember about this?

[0:41:45]

Hal Chase: That it was created by a collective effort of so-called whites and so-called blacks that was successful, and it was direct action, some of that. The second fact, the legacy. That legacy, two of the key players of that so-called modern civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s, one of them on a legal end, Charles Hamilton Houston of Washington, D.C, Amherst College, Harvard Law, who was invited, encourage, I think persuaded by his parents' good friend, Dr. Louis T. Wright. Wright went on to be national chair, still holds the record for the longest serving chair of the NAACP. That was the man who had the strategy of challenging Plessy versus Ferguson head on, showing it was definitely separate and it was even more definitely unequal.

[0:42:45]

Theo Mayer: Just to clarify for the audience, both of those gentlemen were graduates from Camp Des Moines, right?

[0:42:53]

Hal Chase: Yes. Charles Hamilton Houston from what we call the OTC, the trained captains, lieutenants. Louis T. Wright of the MOTC, medical officer training camp, which overlapped the OTC camp at Fort Des Moines.

[0:43:10]

Theo Mayer: Historian Hal Chase was born in Des Moines, Iowa, and has taught US, African American, and Iowa history. One of the most important World War I Commission focuses is on education. To that end, the commission is a partner on a program from the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City that publishes a wonderful bimonthly e-newsletter, each issue themed to a topic and filled with references, links, and resources which teachers and students can both use to explore and teach specific World War I topics. A February 2019 issue is about to hit the email inboxes, so we invited Liesl Christman Agan, the Digital Content Manager from the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, to join us and tell us about the newsletter, and specifically the February issue. Liesl, thanks for joining us.

[0:44:08]

Liesl Agan: Thank you, Theo.

[0:44:09]

Theo Mayer: Liesl, before we get too far into the current issue, could you tell us about the bimonthly education e-newsletter program as an overview?

[0:44:17]

Liesl Agan: Yes. Understanding the Great War is this bimonthly education newsletter. It's a collaborative project from the National World War I Museum and Memorial and the US World War I Centennial Commission with numerous partners. What it is is we send out this email every other month, which has education resources, including curriculum, primary sources, articles, and videos, all on a different topic about World War I. All of these resources can be accessed online at the worldwar.org/education.

[0:44:49]

Theo Mayer: Liesl, can you give us a couple of the topics that you guys have done in the past?

[0:44:53]

Liesl Agan: Yes. Some of our past topics have included American volunteers, the US entry into the war, propaganda, medicine and shell-shock, of course the end of the war, the occupation of Germany, remembrance, and Gold Star Mothers. Our next issue will be on the Treaty of Versailles.

[0:45:11]

Theo Mayer: That's the one that's publishing right now, right?

[0:45:13]

Liesl Agan: Yes. That will be going out on February 19th.

[0:45:16]

Theo Mayer: Okay then. Let's talk a little bit about that issue. What are some of the things that readers are going to find inside?

[0:45:22]

Liesl Agan: Well, we're trying to take as broad of a view as we can of the Treaty of Versailles, so we're going to include a lot of global resources. Right now we're planning on sharing a video from the Great War YouTube channel, which is, of course, a great resource. We have content from the Imperial War Museums, the Smithsonian Magazine, as well as some from the British Library.

[0:45:42]

Theo Mayer: These e-newsletters aren't what is called in publishing perishable. In other words, the first issue is as relevant and useful today as it was when it came out. What would you say have been the top three most popular issues?

[0:45:55]

Liesl Agan: Well, we do keep these archives online so people can access them at any time. When they first went out, our most popular issue was actually on art and music of World War I. After the fact, one of our most popular one online has been the contributions of women in World War I.

[0:46:11]

Theo Mayer: How do people access the archive?

[0:46:14]

Liesl Agan: They just go to the worldwar.org/education. There's a link there that take us to past issues. From there, they can click on any one of the issues and check out past resources. That link also takes them to the resource archive, which is a searchable database of all of the resources we've shared in the newsletter. We have a lot of great partners that have contributed resources to this project. It includes, of course, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, National History Day, but also Scholastic, the American Battle Monuments Commission, and History Channel and, of course, the National World War I Museum and Memorial and the Centennial Commission.

[0:46:54]

Theo Mayer: Thank you, Liesl. This next issue is coming out shortly, and we've already told people where to find it. Thank you for coming in.

[0:47:00]

Liesl Agan: well, thank you.

[0:47:02]

Theo Mayer: Liesl Christman Agan is the Digital Content Manager from the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City. We have links for subscribing to the education newsletter and the archives. Just go to the podcast notes. In Articles and Posts, where we highlight the stories you'll find in our weekly newsletter, The Dispatch. Headline: Colonel Charles Young was not alone: The Systemic Destruction of the African American Officer Corps in World War I. World War I was fought with the backdrop of Jim Crow in a blatantly racist America. One of the best descriptions of service by an African American World War I officer was written by Charles H. Houston for the Pittsburgh Courier in 1940. Get the link from the weekly Dispatch to that article. Headline: Captain Ely Miller, first recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross. Captain Miller was killed in action on March 9th, 1918 in the Champagne defensive sector of France. He was buried in the American Cemetery at Aisne. Captain Miller's death earned him the title as the first aviator flying for the Americans killed in combat during World War I. Headline: Digging up the past: World War I hand grenade found in French potato shipment to Hong Kong. The German-made World War I grenade was found in a batch of fresh potatoes shipped from France, according to the South China Morning Post. The news outlet reported that the explosive was believed to have been buried in a field before accidentally being unearthed

along with harvested potatoes. It was discovered while going through the factory's potato processing machine. But dig this: it was the second grenade to be found in Hong Kong within a week. Talk about freedom fries. Headline: AEF troops continue fighting in Russia after Armistice on Western Front. Did you know that the American troops of the AEF continued fighting long after the 11th of November Armistice. They did so as part of the AEF's incursion into Russia. There were actually two American incursions into Russia. They were separated by thousands of miles, as well as having significantly different missions. Headline: Quacks, Alternative Medicine, and the US Army in the First World War. During the First World War, the surgeon general received numerous pitches for miraculous cures for the sick and wounded American soldiers, ranging from anti-seasickness remedies to complex elixirs for treating diseases like tuberculosis and venereal disease. American quacks and non-traditional medical practitioners were seeking a piece of the pie. Headline: ABMC Releases Digital Version of the World War I Battlefield Companion. It's free to download. This is a great new guide for visitors to Europe who want to learn more about America's involvement in World War I, and see the geographic locations where major events occurred. From ABMC, American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries and memorials to private monuments, large and small, more than 50 different spots are highlighted. Links to the full-length articles for all these stories and more are available through our weekly Dispatch newsletter. It's a short and sweet guide to World War I news and information, and it's free. Subscribe at ww1cc.org/subscribe, or follow the link in the podcast notes. That wraps up episode number 109 of the award-winning World War I Centennial News Podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests, crew, and supporters, including Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, commission Executive Director Dan Dayton, Mike Shuster, curator for the Great War Project blog, Rob Laplander for graciously allowing us to serialize his short story about Roy Holtz, Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian and author, US World War I Centennial Commissioner, Dr. Libby O'Connell, Dr. Hal Chase of Iowa University, Liesl Christman Agan, the Digital Content Manager for the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City. Thanks to Mac Nelson and Tim Crow, our interview editing team; Kat Laszlo, the line producer for the show; JL Michaud and Dave Kramer for research; and I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. The US World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate, and educate about World War I. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I, which includes this podcast. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators, their classrooms, and the public. We're helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across the country. And, of course, we're building America's National World War I Memorial in the nation's capital. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as our other sponsors, the Starr Foundation, the General Motors Foundation, and the people of Walmart. The podcast and a full-length transcript of the show can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn. You'll find World War I Centennial News in all the places that you get your podcast, and 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. We're on Facebook @ww1centennial. Thank you for joining us. Don't forget, keep the story alive for America by helping us build the memorial. Just text the letters WWI or WW1 to the phone number 91999.

[0:53:55]

Speaker 10: (singing)

[0:53:55]

Theo Mayer: Hey, thank you for listening. So long.

[0:54:29]