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7 speakers (Theo Mayer, Mike Schuster, Edward Lengle, Alan Axelrod, Robert Blocker, Lucy Kaplan, Elizabeth F.)

[0:00:07]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 117. It's about then, what was happening 100 years ago in the aftermath of World War I, and it's about now. How World War I is being remembered, and commemorated, written about, and discussed. But most important, it's about why and how we'll never let those events fall back into the mists of obscurity. So join us as we explore the many facets of World War I, then and now. This week on the show, we explore the headlines of the newspapers 100 years ago in the first week of April 1919. Mike Schuster tells the story of the frantic efforts in April of 1919 to finish up the peace treaty. Dr. Edward Lengle launches into a 10 part countdown introducing us to his favorite memoirs of World War I. This week, a British soldier's testament to "Those we loved." By I.L. Read. In our historian's corner, I sit down with author, Alan Axelrod, to explore one of the most fascinating characters of the era, George Creel. In fact, we got so into it that we had to break this into two parts; this week is part one. Elizabeth Foxwell, an author that you met a few weeks ago is back with a wonderful profile of an African American woman composer, Helen Hagen. That 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 Star Foundation, The Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, and the Richard Lounsbury Foundation. I am Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the Commission, and your host. Welcome to the show. Because Mike Schuster does such a good job in laying out the month at the peace conference, and because we have such a full show this week, we're only going to highlight a few headlines. Just some key stories, they include: "The Feared Threat Of The Communist Bolsheviks In Russia." "Wilson May Be Getting Ready To Sail Home." "What They Decided To Do With The Kaiser." And "The Monroe Doctrine Issue." So with that as a setup, let's jump into our centennial time machine and go back to the first week of April 1919, and check those stories out. We're back in April 100 years ago, and throughout the week, there are dire warnings about Germany falling to the communists. Here's a mash up of the headlines for the week, headline: "Bolshevism Grips Germany." "Reds Deal With Lennon." "Hunger Aids German Reds." "Allied Reports Show Country Drifting Towards Russia's Condition." "Their Morale Seems Undermined By Lavishly Financed Sparta Side Propaganda." "Sparta Sides Bound To Russia By Compact Signed." "Help Of Armies Is Pledged." "Bavarians Proclaim Soviet Rule." "New Regime In Munich." "Communists In Vienna Are Also Busily Plotting To Overtake Government." "Allies There Take Action, Demand That Hungarian Emissaries Be Expelled From German Austria." "German Reds Wait Chance." "General Von Hoffman Fears Bolsheviks Wave Will Engulf The Land." "Riots And Loot In Saxony." "Austria Asks For British Troops." Frustrated at the turn of events, the truculence, and posturing, and the pace of progress, it looks like Wilson may be getting ready to head home. Again, here's a mash up of the headlines for the week, headline: "Wilson Summons His Ship, The George Washington." "Wilson Cables Navy, Directs Preparation Of His Vessel For Quick Return From Europe." "Deadlock In Conference Might Mean His Departure." "Harmony, A Longer Stay Causes A Piece Delayed." "European Domestic Policies Are Held Largely Responsible For Obstruction." "Wilson's Plans For Return Interpreted As Warning." "Wilson For A Lasting Peace, Has Firmly Stood For Principles Against Allied Demands." "Might Leave For A Time And Return To Help Europe Solve Her Difficulties If It Was Needed." "He Did Not Want Secrecy, But Was Forced To It By European Diplomacy." And on Friday, April 11, 1919, there are two stories. The first is a follow-up to last week's discussion about the fate of the Kaiser. Dateline April 11, 1919, headline: "Kaiser's Life To Be Spared." "Wilhelm's Narrow Escape." "Decision Is Against His Execution For Crimes Charged." "Lansing Opposed Trial. Agreed, Emperor Was Responsible But Held That No Adequate Tribunal Existed." And the story reads: "The decision in the Council of Four yesterday, has made it clear that ex-Kaiser Wilhelm is not to suffer capital punishment for any high crimes and misdemeanors. But he'll probably never know how narrowly he escaped the imposition of the supreme penalty. He may thank his stars and, to an equal degree, Robert Lansing, Secretary of State of the United States for the mercy that is to be shown him." And finally, a story about the inclusion of language that protects the US Monroe Doctrine in the League of Nations: "New Article In League Draft Saves Monroe Doctrine." "Monroe Section Adopted." "Wilson Presents Amendment Drafted By Colonel House, Meets Little Opposition." Okay, well that's the headlines but what the heck is the Monroe Doctrine actually all about? To understand that, we need to go way back, almost another 100 years, to 1823. America's only 50 years old, a little more than one generation. It's December 2, 1823, President James Monroe delivers a message to Congress, buried in it is a statement warning European powers to stay out of the Western Hemisphere, "The American continent is henceforth not to be considered as subject for future colonization by any European powers." It is a big issue, sailing around and grabbing hunks of territory is a major national activity at the time. Monroe and his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, see several threats from Spain, France, and Russia, who's already beginning to move south from Alaska towards Oregon. President Monroe is establishing the idea that European powers, and the US, each have their own separate spheres of influence, and that Europe will not interfere with the governments or established colonies in the Western Hemisphere, just as America will not involve itself in European disagreements or wars. You can see the problem right away. Look, the reality is that pipsqueak 1820s America can't really enforce anything much, but uppity Monroe and Adams draw an important line in

the sand. Fast forward one generation and the first real test happens in 1865 when the US backs Mexico over the French. Another generation forward at the turn of the 20th century, the Monroe Doctrine gets stretched a bit by Teddy Roosevelt, to not only bar Europe from interfering with the Caribbean or Latin America, but Teddy claims the sole right for us, the United States, to do that. And so we're back to 100 years ago this month, and the Monroe Doctrine becomes a sore point in the debate over the League of Nations. France, Great Britain and other European states see the doctrine as limiting the authority of the League of Nations. And so, the Republican senators in the United States, see the League of Nations as a threat to American authority in the hemisphere; kind of a stalemate. This week, 100 years ago. It's a really big deal when Wilson gets the following language included in the peace agreement. "Nothing in this covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international agreements, such as treaties, arbitration, or regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine for securing the maintenance of peace." There's a lot to explore here, but that provides some context for how the concerns over the Monroe Doctrine are possibly the key reason why America never ratifies the Versailles Treaty, and never becomes a member of the League of Nations; even though it was Wilson's concept. So speaking of the peace conference, to give us an overview of the conference in April of 1919, we're joined by Mike Schuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for the Great War Project blog. Mike, in April 1919, there's a lot of pressure to move the process along, and also a lot of agenda still unresolved on the table.

[0:10:32]

Mike Schuster: There certainly are, Theo. So the headline reads. "Frantic Effort To Finish The Treaty." "Fears Of Communist Takeover In Germany." "The Chief Obstacle, Wilson Himself." "Disagreement Over Who Started The War." And this is special to the Great War project. "It's April in Paris, and by this time a century ago, that peace conference is lurching toward its finale." So reports the story in Thomas Fleming. "The treaty had to be finished without further delay or galloping Bolshevism would swallow Germany. The swarms of experts were told to finalize everything, and a message was sent to the Germans telling them to send representatives to Versailles on April 25, for the purpose of receiving the text of the preliminaries of the treaty as drawn up by the allies and associated powers. The Big Four, Britain, France, Italy, and the US now turn their attention to a treaty with Austria, Hungary, a job that could be compared in historian Fleming's view to "Putting together pieces of a draft puzzle." Here, Wilson confronted another dismaying problem, the French, still obsessed by their fear of Germany, where unilaterally turning the states born of the breakup of the Austrian, Hungarian, and Russian empires into military satellites on Germany's borders. French officers and weaponry, reports Fleming, poured into Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania; not to speak of the enormous numbers of troops, as well, deploying from those newly minted states. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was overheard denouncing Europe's small states as troublemakers and expensive in the bargain. The Prime Minister assailed the monstrous demands of Czechoslovakia as typical of the miserable demands of the small states. "Meanwhile", Reports Fleming, "The draft of the final peace treaty was in frantic progress. Staffers toiled on technicalities and wording, other bureaucrats scurried around Paris to find out what had been decided about, say, Poland's claims to Upper Silesia, and similar matters. Fleming goes on, "When it came to the section on reparations, they discovered that no one, including Woodrow Wilson, had paid serious attention to a decision to preface it with the statement asserting that Germany was responsible for starting the war." To the British and the French, this was an article of faith, of course, their propaganda had repeated it almost every day for four years. But Wilson was on record as saying "No one or everyone was responsible." On the face of it writes the story and Fleming, the accusation was bizarre. No one claimed that the Germans had shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo and 1914, nor that this murder of the Crown Prince of Germany's chief ally did not have a great deal to do with precipitating the conflict. The War Guilt Clause pretended the central event never happened, instead the document curtly demanded that Germany acknowledge its responsibility for causing all the loss and damage to which the allied and associated governments have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed on them by the aggression of Germany and its allies. Compounding the irony, this statement was written by a former Wilson pupil at Princeton and future Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. That's the news these days a century ago from the Great War project.

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Theo Mayer: Mike Schuster is the Curator for the Great War project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. This week, regular contributor, Historian Dr. Edward Lengle, starts a new series of stories profiling his favorite of the many hundreds of published personal accounts from the war. This is the first of his 10 best war memoirs from World War I. This week, a British soldier's testament to, "Those we loved." By I.L. Reed.

[0:14:28]

Edward Lengle: On Christmas day 1914, British and German soldiers met in no man's land to exchange friendly greetings in what became known as 'The Christmas Truce'. For a few brief hours, war and hatred faded into the background, replaced by [inaudible] feelings of goodwill. Horrified officers on both sides cracked down on the fraternization, swearing it must never happen again; but it did. In December 1915, British soldier, Dick Reed, of the Leicestershire Regiment, witnessed an attempt to renew the Christmas truce; its promising beginnings, and it's tragic end. Born in the coastal town of Eastbourne, England in 1895, I.L. Dick Reed responded promptly to Lord Kitchener's call for volunteers at the beginning of the First World War. Assigned to the eighth battalion of the Leicestershire

Regiment, he trained as a Lewis Machine gunner before being sent to the front, near the small French village of Bezonvaux in December 1915. His first impressions of military service were excited, and only slightly nervous anticipation and a delight at the comradeship and good cheer he encountered, even in the cold, dirty trenches; the excitement would fade. As the months and years past, Reed experienced intense combat in the Battle Of The Somme, at Épehy, and Flanders, and in the second Battle of the Marne. One after another, his friends were killed or badly wounded, to be replaced by strangers who no sooner became friends than they disappeared; only Reed continued physically unscathed. Rising to the rank of Sergeant, he was then commissioned to Lieutenant in the Royal Sussex regiment. During the war's final months, he was decorated for bravery including with Aquatic Air. Many years after the war ended, Reed decided to write a memoir of his experiences for his grandchildren titling it, "Of Those We Loved." In testimony to lost friends. Those grandchildren published it in book form in 1994, over 20 years after Reed's death. A straightforward, gentle, and wonderfully intimate book, it's enlivened by photographs and dozens of pen and ink drawings of life at the front. Having read many hundreds of published memoirs and diaries over the course of 30 years studying the First World War, I place I.L. Reed's "Of Those We Love." Number 10 on my list of the world's finest personal accounts. Reed was on his first posting at the front near Bezonvaux in December 1915 when he heard a sudden den of shouting from the German trenches about 30 yards away. Alarmed, he and his crew rushed to man their Lewis Gun, but no attack was underway. In the bright winter sunshine, Reed was astonished to see a group of British soldiers from his regiment leave their trenches to meet another group of German soldiers in no man's land. They met, Reed recalled, and groups were soon deep in conversation, gesticulating and laughing in efforts to understand one another. We saw the German stroking the hairy coats worn by our chaps; mud encrusted though they were. Cigarettes were exchanged, and we observed several [inaudible] smoking cigars. The Germans offered their water bottles, which we were told afterwards, contained schnapps or coffee. Reed and his fellow crewman prepared to leave their Lewis Gun and join the group in no man's land. He was particularly eager to meet two German soldiers nicknamed Charlie and Paul who, as Reed recalled, "Shouted across to us at stand two in the evenings and sang very abusive songs in a light hearted way, reveling and all the swear words." Alas, however, a British officer appeared, blew his whistle and ordered them back into their trenches. The officer then one out into no man's land where he met a German officer. The two men saluted, had a brief conversation, shook hands, and with every appearance of regret led their soldiers back into the trenches; silence descended. A little later that afternoon, as Reed watched, a German soldier climb onto the parapet of his trench, and stood to relieve himself in plain sight. To Reed's horror, a rifle shot echoed from the British side of no man's land, and the German fell backward into his own trench. "We all felt ashamed for our side." He recalled. A few moments later Paul cried out, "Tommy you don't play the game." They never sang or joked again after that, a man who showed himself above the parapet was as good as dead.

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Theo Mayer: Dr. Edward Lengle's blog is called 'A Storyteller Hiking Through History', and it's filled with first person perspectives and accounts that provide a nuanced insight into the era. We have links to Ed's post and his author's website in the podcast notes. On April 1, 1919, the official bulletin, the US government's war gazette suddenly stops. There's no announcement, there was no final edition; it just stops. Now the man behind the official bulletin, as well as a plethora of other public information about the war, the war effort, and the fundraising for the war was the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information, George Edward Creel. Now as our regular listeners know, I'm not a historian, I'm just a really interested guy learning and exploring this era of our history with wide-eyed amazement along with you. And I have to declare, flat out, one of the absolute most interesting and obscure characters of the era is George Creel. He's neither a famous name, nor a decorated hero in history, but he is someone who's touched each of our lives in untold ways. And with us today is Alan Axelrod, the author of more than 150 books on leadership, history, military history, and business, among others. And one of those books that Alan wrote is called 'Selling the Great War. The Making of American Propaganda'; it's the bio of George Creel. We got together to talk about George, and it turned into such an interesting conversation, we're going to have to break this out into two parts. Here's part one of George Creel, the man who sold America on World War I. Alan, welcome.

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Alan Axelrod: Great to be with you.

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Theo Mayer: Alan, you and I have talked about George Creel quite a bit, but let's maybe introduce him in a broad context first.

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Alan Axelrod: Well, he was a young man from rural Missouri, who was the son of a doting mother and an alcoholic father, and not very well educated. But he had a quick mind, and he was intensely curious, and he became a journalist, sort of through the back door. He worked for some small town papers and then moved to New York, and found work as a joke writer. He eked out a living writing jokes that were just stuck in newspapers to fill space. But eventually, he linked up with a few influential people, and he became a muckraker, he became a very socially high

minded journalist. And in this job, he became acquainted with Woodrow Wilson during his first run at the presidency, and he just fell in love with the man, he fell in love with progressivism. And by the time Wilson stood for reelection in 1916, Creel had ingratiated himself with Wilson, and became the writer of Wilson's campaign, biography, and became a leading exponent of Wilson; particularly Wilson's opposition to any American involvement in World War I. And, of course, Wilson won by a very narrow margin, reelection, largely on the campaign slogan "He kept us out of war." Then, of course, he takes the oath of office, back in those days, in March of 1917. And on April 6 of that year, he asked Congress for a declaration of war so that the United States could join the war that he had kept the country out of during this first administration. And this put Creel in the position of having to turn the American public around, 180 degrees, from this orientation of pacifism, of absolute neutrality, to total commitment to a war in Europe.

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Theo Mayer: Now, having an administration and a president who gets elected, who brings in a leading and, perhaps, even controversial journalists into his inner circle, that sounds pretty familiar.

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Alan Axelrod: Absolutely. Creel had the advantage of ... He was considered a kind of gadfly at this point; his real power came once he started the Committee on Public Information. He was an outsider, he was always an outsider and part of him relished being an outsider, and part of him wanted desperately to get into the center of activity and the center of power. He didn't really want to be the man in front of the curtain, he wanted to be the man behind the curtain, he wanted to be the power behind the power; and that's what he achieved with the Committee on Public Information.

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Theo Mayer: Well, the Committee on Public Information really became an incredibly powerful aspect of American public opinion, at large.

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Alan Axelrod: It was, and what is interesting about it is that Woodrow Wilson, who is a man of infinite contradiction, who was proposing to fight a war as he famously told Congress in his war message, April 2, he was taking America into a war to make the world safe for democracy. But his first steps were ushering through passage of draconian espionage legislation, and what he wanted to do was clamp down very rigorous censorship. He was very much afraid of espionage, and what we would call today 'Fake news'. What Creel did is took him aside and told him this would be very destructive not just to democracy, which he really didn't pursue that point very far, but it would be destructive to the war effort because any effort at over censorship would make the American people feel, quite rightly, that the government was simply hiding something, and that their motives were not on the up and up. So as an alternative, what Creel proposed is that he would create a central bureau, through which all information about the war would pass. That it would become the clearinghouse and the source for every bit of information about the Great War that would be published in this country. There would be no censorship, but there would only be one source of information, and it would be produced in such a stream and such a flow that newspapers would welcome it. Their work would be done for them, and they would be supplied with an endless stream of war information that would be supplied in great detail, and with all apparent openness; and that is what happened.

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Theo Mayer: Yeah, and let's talk about that for a moment. I mean, obviously, in today's parlance, it would be 'Control the message', but they actually started publishing a newspaper, The Official Bulletin, which started the month after war was declared. Creel was the publisher, Wilson requested it, they charged a lot of money for The Official Bulletin so that the newspapers didn't think that he was trying to compete with them, and they started publishing, daily; except Sunday.

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Alan Axelrod: And, in fact, it was the only time in American history that there was, in effect, a national state newspaper. They did the bulletin, they also prepared news stories which were distributed from a central point in Washington DC, and were available to all journalists. And they launched into many other publishing ventures, educational ventures, of course, the great poster campaigns, what Creel called 'The war of the fences', where he wanted recruiting posters and posters to support the sale of war bonds and liberty bonds, and posters to dramatize the atrocities that the Germans were committing and so forth; he wanted these to be plastered on every available space in the public environment. So it was a combination of very overt propaganda, but also just information; constant flow of information in every conceivable medium. The most characteristic, of course, was the four minute men who were a cadre of about 75,000 of them, all volunteers, usually young men reasonably prominent in their community, who were asked to deliver a speech relating, in some way, to the war. They weren't told what to say, but they were given sort of templates and suggestions, and they were to deliver this speech, for the most part, in movie theaters; never to interrupt the movie. But it was done during the four minutes it took a professional projectionist to

change reels on a feature length film in those days of silent cinema. And that was four minutes, and they became known as the Four Minute Men. And it was a live presentation, sort of at the intermission of a show, and it was never delivered from a script, it always had the appearance of being quite spontaneous. It was delivered by men who are known to the community, and it was meant to create a grassroots support for everything related to the war.

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Theo Mayer: Now he was the marketing behind the Liberty bond endeavor which, it struck me, it was something like 16, almost \$17 billion.

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Alan Axelrod: Yeah, this was in 1917 and 1918 dollars. And each of the liberty loan campaigns was vastly oversubscribed, it was an extraordinary success. It also was engineered such that those who couldn't afford to buy bonds, would buy stamps; you could spend pennies or you could spend really a great deal of money supporting the war. And he handled what I would call 'The soft sell' end of it, the persuasive end of it. But that complemented the other aspect of shaping thought during the war which was real social pressure, the whole idea that 'If you're not with us you're against us', and nobody wanted to be a slacker. If you weren't out there actually fighting the war, you had to be doing something else, and the very least you could do was contribute money to the liberty loans. And your neighbors would see to it that you did, lists of contributors were published; people were really strong armed into doing this. But on Creel's side, he made it appealing.

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Theo Mayer: Well I remember a story, Alan, where on the first liberty loan drive, he actually got all of the bells in all of the churches to do a ring countdown of how many days were left before the bond drive was over. So he, somehow, convinced schools, and churches, and civic halls to all toll their bells, every day on a countdown; that's pretty amazing.

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Alan Axelrod: Well, this really was the birth of public relations. Creel's own account of the Committee on Public Information was called 'How we advertise America'. But it really wasn't advertising, that was the wrong word, it was public relations and that word really didn't exist in 1917, 1918. But the men who became the creators of American public relations were working for Creel, the most famous of them was Edward Bernays, who had an incredibly long career; the man died just a few years ago, he was I think 101.

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Theo Mayer: Well noted as the father of public relations.

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Alan Axelrod: And that is what he was. And he was actually born in Vienna, he was the nephew of Sigmund Freud. He grew up in the United States, he came to the US when he was less than a year old; he was an American kid. He took to the Committee in Public Information, what he was already creating in the way of shaping the American mind; which is what he talked about, shaping the popular mind. But he honed, as a result of working on the Committee on Public Information, he honed what he called 'The science propaganda'; this led to the creation of PR as an industry. And the idea, the difference between public relations, as he conceived of it, and advertising was that advertising broadcast a message, public relations created a mindset. It appealed to influencers, it was an attempt really to shape perception and to plant ideas in the public mind as if those ideas came from the public themselves; it really was a campaign to shape reality, from the ground up.

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Theo Mayer: It's a rebranding of propaganda, fundamentally.

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Alan Axelrod: He called it propaganda from the beginning. And Creel also embrace the term propaganda but he said that it was in the sense that the Catholic Church used it, which was as the propagation of the faith, and the faith that he was propagating, that Creel was propagating, was the faith of Woodrow Wilson which was democracy, as Creel saw it, and fighting for democracy, and that was good propaganda; but it was propaganda.

[0:33:15]

Theo Mayer: That was part one of George Creel, the man who sold America on World War I with Alan Axelrod. A prolific author and publisher who's also, by the way, writing a book about the history of the World War I Centennial Commission. We're going to continue with part two next week and, of course, we have links for you in the podcast notes. Okay, it really is time to fast forward into the present with World War I Centennial news now. As our regular listeners know, this part of the podcast is about now, and how World War I is being remembered, and

commemorated, written about, and discussed, taught, and learned, and here is where we continue to spotlight the surprisingly numerous and significant remembrance and commemoration activities surrounding World War I and World War I themes. On Yale University's website called 'Yale News', there is a video published about a remarkable woman named Helen Hagen. The voices you're going to hear are those of Robert Blocker, the Dean of Music, and Lucy Kaplan, a graduate student in American and African American Studies.

[0:34:38]

Robert Blocker: Helen Hagen was one of the most remarkable people who attended Yale early in the 1900s, and went on to a distinguished career. What made this so remarkable, at that time, is you have a young woman who is African American, who is female, who is coming to Yale University which, at the time, was an all male institution. She came to the Yale School of Music and graduated in 1912, she was piano major here, she was a composer. She composed a concerto while she was here and she played with the New Haven Symphony.

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Lucy Kaplan: Unfortunately, most of her music today has been lost, but I'm hoping that it's somewhere out there and we just haven't found it yet; that it's not actually lost forever; but the piano concerto does survive.

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Robert Blocker: Helen Hagen went quickly and proudly to serve her nation as an entertainer in World War I. She went to France, and she played for the African American troops who were stationed in that theater. That was a time when troops heard all types of music, popular music, classical music, religious music. And clearly, she was talented enough to be an important figure in that regard.

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Lucy Kaplan: When we think of that time, we often think of ragtime, the blues, but we rarely think of classical music. But, actually, she shows us that there's this whole other side to African American musical history.

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Robert Blocker: It was Elizabeth Foxwell's book, *In Their Own Words: American Women in World War I*, that brought Helen Hagen back to life for us.

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Theo Mayer: Well we're fortunate to have Elizabeth Foxwell with us today to talk about Helen Hagen and her remarkable story. Elizabeth, it's great to have you back on the show.

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Elizabeth F.: Thank you, Theo, it's nice to be back.

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Theo Mayer: So, Elizabeth, I understand that while you were researching your book, *In Their Own Words: American Women in World War I*, you came across the story. For our listeners who may not have caught your interview with us last month, can you get those quick reprise of the book?

[0:36:55]

Elizabeth F.: Yes, my book is a collection of first person accounts by US women in the war, and I discovered Helen Hagen while I was researching it. Although I didn't find a first person account by Hagen, I found enough details about her World War I experiences, and her life and work for a blog post.

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Theo Mayer: Let's learn a little bit more about Helen Hagen. She's African American, she's a woman, she's a musician, she attended an all-male Yale University.

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Elizabeth F.: Yes, that's true that she is the first black, female graduate of the Yale School of Music; that occurred in 1912. And it's also thought, at Yale, that she may be the first black female graduate of Yale in its entirety. The published reactions to her playing that I've read, the reviews, seem to indicate that she just blew the doors off of everyone with her talent. She was her church's organist before she was 12 years old, and she earned a prestigious fellowship to study in France after she graduated. So her achievements, her early promise seemed quite evident.

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Theo Mayer: So she went off to France to entertain and support the troops? When did that happen?

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Elizabeth F.: That occurred from winter to summer in 1919. She was the only black female musician to be sent to World War I France, and she was one of only 19 black women with the YMCA in France. She was a member of what was called 'The Proctor Party'. And that was formed at the request of General Pershing to entertain the black troops, and it was headed by minister Henry to Proctor; thus the name. And the third member of the group was Joshua Blanton, he was a Hampton graduate who taught negro spirituals to the servicemen. Blanton places the number of troops that they entertained at nearly 300,000, Proctor places it at 100,000; so it's somewhere between 100 and 300,000. Henry Hugh Proctor wrote about Helen Hagen and talking about the effect of her on the servicemen. He said, "The change was still greater when Miss Hagen would appear and play upon the piano. In many cases they had not seen a woman of their own race since they left home. And, frequently, tears would swell up in the eyes of these men as they looked upon this talented woman." And she was dubbed by the Pittsburgh Courier 'The darling of the Doughboys.' And it really should be noted, Theo, that to go to France, she had to put her promising concert career on hold, and the income that went with it.

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Theo Mayer: You know we've had a lot of researchers and genealogists on the show who, for a lack of a better term, wind up adopting their subject; it gets really personal. And that happened with you and Helen too, what's that story?

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Elizabeth F.: Yes, I think adopt is a really good word for that. When I was doing research on Hagen, I was absolutely stunned to learn that she has been in an unmarked grave at Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven since her death in 1964. Now this was someone who was the first black pianists to perform a solo recital in a New York concert venue; that was 1921. She had met Saint-Saëns and Debussy, she had faculty positions at what is now Tennessee State University and Bishop College in Texas, and she had long experience as a teacher and performer. So I was just so stunned and I felt it was so important to recognize her contributions that I started a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for a grave marker, and it was so heartwarming how people across the country responded. And these were classical music fans, they were New Haven residents, or they were just simply people who felt she deserved a proper monument to her life and work.

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Theo Mayer: Well Helen Hagen seems so completely remarkable. Why do you think she faded into obscurity?

[0:41:14]

Elizabeth F.: Well, I think, even though she is credited with composing songs, pianoforte pieces, violin and piano sonatas and stringed quartets, we only have one extant work and that is her Piano Concerto and C minor and we only have a fragment of that, which she composed and performed while she was at Yale. And she was unable to sustain a concert career, which is what she also wrote to W. E. B. Du Bois in 1932. I'm not sure whether she had problems because of The Depression or whether she was black; that's kind of uncertain. There is an indication that she recorded Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Bamboula, on the black-owned Black Swan Records, but I haven't been able to find a copy of the recording yet. I really think if that we had had more of her work in the marketplace, we might be studying her like Florence Price or Scott Joplin.

[0:42:13]

Theo Mayer: Yale University, you just mentioned Yale University, they got involved, tell us how that happened.

[0:42:18]

Elizabeth F.: Well, when I launched the crowdfunding campaign, Ed Stannard of the New Haven Register interviewed me and Lucy Kaplan, who you mentioned at the top, is writing her dissertation at Yale on early African American composers; and so she talked it up at Yale. And then these pieces were followed by pieces in the Yale Daily News and the Yale School of Music, and it sort of snowballed from there. Hagan's story resonated with New Haven Mayor, Toni Harp, who's a black woman. And she spoke at the grave marker dedication ceremony, and even mentioned Hagen in her State of the City address.

[0:42:58]

Theo Mayer: It's not only a pleasure having you back on the show, but I think it's so wonderful that Helen popped out of your research to become such a personal friend. And, really, you're shedding light on your friend's story has stimulated a lot of others to take a deeper look at World War I. Thank you.

[0:43:14]

Elizabeth F.: Thank you, Theo.

[0:43:15]

Theo Mayer: Elizabeth Foxwell is the editor of a collection of first person accounts of US women in the war called, *In Their Own Words, American Women in World War I*. We have links for you in the podcast notes to her blog where the story came to light, her book, and the Yale University article and video. We're closing this week with articles and posts, where we highlight the stories that you'll find in a weekly newsletter, *The Dispatch*. And our first story, new scale model maquette of natural World War I Memorial sculpture. The story, Sculptor, Sabin Howard, has made an important new development on the natural World War Memorial in Washington DC. Working with the Pangolin Editions Foundry in the UK, Sabin has been able to create a new, smaller, highly detailed sculptural maquette of the final World War I Memorial design. This maquette will be part of the Centennial Commission's progress update presented to the next regulatory review meeting of the US Commission of Fine Arts, the CFA, coming this April. Our second story is about John Purroy Mitchel, the boy mayor of New York City, who died in World War I. The full article is the story about the wartime Mayor John Purroy Mitchel. After failing to win reelection in 1917, he enlisted in the US Army Air Service as a flying cadet and, unfortunately, he died in the war. Another lead into another story, I feel a direct personal connection to our Doughboys. Over the years, we've met several members of our World War I community, who've gotten personally involved in hands-on projects that help them embrace our World War I history. They include trench work restorations, tabletop diorama creations, re-enactor impersonations, restorations of trains, tanks, trucks, artillery pieces, ambulances, warships; we love these projects. And we always find interesting the stories behind those people will undertake them. Jared Shank of Ohio is an army veteran, and he's just started working on an incredible find, a World War I era light artillery piece with a remarkable story. The next piece, 1919: Peace? New exhibition at natural World War I museum and memorial in Kansas City. The 1919: Peace? exhibit explores the aftermath and the legacy of the Versailles Treaty signing. The exhibit opens this month on April 2 and runs through March 1, 2020. The next story. One century ago, bringing them back after the Navy put them across. Naval historians of the First World War tend to gravitate towards the great battles such as Jutland and the ferocious, frustrating Dardanelles Campaign. But these dramatic naval and [inaudible] actions had nothing to do with the US Navy's most decisive contribution to the war; delivering the 2 million man, American expeditionary force to Europe and bringing them home. Access all these amazing stories through the links that you'll find in our *Dispatch* newsletter. It's a short and easy guide to a lot of World War I news and information. Subscribe to this wonderful free weekly guide at www.ww1cc.org/subscribe or follow the link in the podcast notes. And that wraps up episode number 117 of the award-winning World War I Centennial News podcast. We want to thank our great guests, talented crew, and supporters including Mike Schuster Curator for the Great War Project blog. Dr. Edward Lengle, military historian and author. Alan Axelrod, author and publisher. Yale University and Yale News. Robert Blocker, Dean of Music. And Lucy Kaplan, graduate student. And, of course, Elizabeth Foxwell, author and historian. Thanks to Matt Nelson and Tim Crow, our interview editing team. Kat Laszlo, the line producer for the show. Dave Kramer and JL Michaud for research and scripts support. 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, including 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 our country. And of course, we're building America's national World War I Memorial in Washington DC. We want to thank the Commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, as well as our other sponsors, the Star Foundation, The Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, and The Richard Lounsbery Foundation. The podcast and a full transcript to the show can be found on our website at www.ww1cc.org/cn. You'll find World War I Centennial news in all the places you get your podcasts, even on YouTube, asking Siri, or by 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 on Facebook at WW1Centennial. Thanks for joining us. And 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. (singing) Thank you so much for listening. So long.

[0:50:14]