

World War I

Assassination of Franz Ferdinand

WWI began in 1914, after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and lasted until November 11th, 1918.

On June 28 Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were in Sarajevo to inspect the imperial armed forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The nationalist young Bosnian movement learned of the archduke's plan to visit, and they took action. Supplied with weapons by Serbian terrorist organization called Black hand, Princip and his cohorts traveled to Sarajevo in time for the archduke's visit.

As they were touring the city in an open car with little security, a Serbian nationalist threw a bomb at their car, but it rolled off the back of the vehicle. Later that day, the imperial car took a wrong turn where a nationalist was standing and he fired into the car shooting Franz Ferdinand and Sophie at point-blank range.

The Serbian government took steps to wipe out terrorist organizations within its borders, suppress anti-Austrian propaganda and expected an independent investigation by the Austria-Hungary government to be done into Franz Ferdinand's assassination or they would face military action. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28th, 1914.

On August 1st, after hearing the news of Russia's general mobilization, Germany declared war on Russia and launched its attack on Russia's ally France, through Belgium, violating Belgian neutrality and bringing Great Britain into the war as well.

Beginning of a War

Convinced that Austria-Hungary was readying for war, the Serbian government ordered the Serbian army to mobilize and appealed to Russia for assistance. Within a week, Russia, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Serbia had lined up against Austria-Hungary and Germany, and WWI had begun.

The Western Front

Germany began fighting WWI on two separate fronts, invading France through Belgium in the west, and confronting Russia in the east.

On August 4th, 1914, German troops crossed the border into Belgium. In the first battle of WWI, the Germans assaulted the heavily fortified city of Liege, using the most powerful weapons in their arsenal--enormous siege cannons--to capture the city by August 15th, 1914.

The Eastern Front

On the Eastern front, Russian forces invaded the German held regions of East Prussia and Poland but were stopped short by German and Austrian forces at the battle of Tannenberg in late August 1914.

America Enters WWI

At the outbreak of fighting in 1914, the United States remained on the sidelines of World War I, adopting a policy of neutrality favored by President Woodrow Wilson, while continuing to engage in commerce with European countries on both sides of the conflict. Neutrality, however, was increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of Germany's unchecked submarine aggression against neutral ships, including those carrying passengers.

In addition to these aggressions, the US was sent a message intercepted by Great Britain. This message from Germany to Mexico, was urging Mexico to declare war on the United States and also join the world war. This escalated the United States past the point of neutrality.

In February 1917 Congress passed a \$215 million orange appropriations bill intended to make the United States ready for war. On April 2, 1917 Woodrow Wilson appeared before Congress and called for a declaration of war against Germany.

Battle of Isonzo

The first battle of the Isonzo took place in the late spring of 1915, soon after Italy's entrance into the world war on the Allied side. In the twelfth battle of the Isonzo, also known as the

Battle of Caporetta (October 1917), German reinforcements helped Austria-Hungary win a decisive victory.

After Caporetta, Italy's allies jumped in to offer increased assistance. British and French- and later, American- troops arrived in the region, and the Allies began to take back the Italian front.

Toward armistice

By the fall of 1918, the Central Powers were unraveling on all fronts. Austria-Hungary, dissolving from within due to growing nationalist movement among its diverse population, reached an armistice on November 4. Following the fall of Austria-Hungary, Germany was finally forced to seek an armistice on November 11, 1918 ending World War I.

Treaty of Versailles

At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Allied leaders stated their desire to build a post-war world that would safeguard itself against future conflicts of such a devastating scale. Some hopeful participants had even begun kind of World War I "the war to end all wars." But the treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, would not achieve that lofty goal.

As the years passed, hatred of the Versailles treaty and its authors settled into a smoldering resentment in Germany that would, two decades later, be counted among the causes of World War II.

Major battles

Second major battle of Marne

On July 15, 1918, the Germans began what would be their final offensive push during WWI. The German general Erich Ludendorff, convinced that attack in Flanders (the region stretching from northern France through Belgium), was the best route to a German victory in the war, decided to launch a sizable diversionary attack further south in order to lure Allied troops away from the main event. When the Germans began their advance after an initial artillery bombardment, they found that the French had set up a line of false trenches, manned by only a few defenders.

As the Germans approached the “real” Allied front lines they were met with a fierce barrage of French and American fire. Trapped and surrounded, the Germans suffered heavy casualties setting the Allies up for the major counterattack they would launch on July 18th.

Battle of Somme

The battle of Somme, also known as the Somme offensive, was one of the largest battles of the first world war. Fought between July 1 and November 1, 1916 near the Somme river in France, it was also one of the bloodiest military battles in history.

The Somme campaign in 1916 was the first great offensive of World War I for the British, and produced a more critical British attitude toward the war. The first day of the Somme offensive, July 1, 1916 resulted in 57,470 British casualties. Which is a greater number of losses than the combined British casualties in the Crimean, Boer, and Korean wars.

By this time the offensive ended in November, the British had suffered around 420,000 casualties, and the French 200,000. Germans casualty numbers from the first world war are controversial but may be about 465,000

Battle of Gallipoli

The Gallipoli campaign of 1915-1916, also known as the battle of Gallipoli or the Dardanelles campaign, was an unsuccessful attempt by the allied powers to control the sea route from Europe to Russia during World War I. With the war stalled on the Western front by 1915, the Allied powers were debating going on the offensive in another region of the conflict, rather than continuing with attacks in Belgium and France.

Spearheaded by the first lord of the British admiralty, Winston Churchill (over the strong position of the first seaward admiral John Fisher, head of the British Navy), the Naval attack on the Dardanelles began with the long range bombardment by British and French battleships on February 19, 1915.

On March 18, 1915 Allied battleships entered the straits; Turkish fire, including undetected mines, sank three of the ships and severely damaged three others.

With Allied casualties in the Gallipoli campaign mounting, Hamilton (with Churchill's support) petitioned Kitchener for 95,000 reinforcements; the war secretary offered barely a quarter of that number.

Women in WWI

At the time of the first world war, most women were barred from voting or serving in the military combat roles. With millions of men away from home, women filled manufacturing and agricultural positions on the homefront. Others provided support on the front lines as nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers, translators, and in rare cases on the battlefield. One observer wrote that American women "do anything they were given to do; that their hours are long; their task is hard; that for them there is small hope of medals and citations and glittering homecoming parades."

On the Homefront

The nations at war mobilized their entire populations. In 1914, the German armaments producer Krupp employed almost no women. By 1917, women made up nearly 30% of its 175,000 workers and a nationwide total of nearly 1.4 million German women were employed in the war labor force.

As women took traditional male jobs in the United States, African-American women were able to make their first major shift from domestic employment to work in offices and factories.

But even women and more traditional roles contributed to the war effort. Every housewife in the US was asked to sign a pledge card stating that she would "carry out directions and advice of the food administrator in the conduct of my household, in so far as my circumstances permit"

Doctors, Nurses, and Ambulance drivers

The Salvation Army, the Red Cross and many other organizations depended on thousands of female volunteers during the war. The American Red Cross operated hospitals to care for war casualties, staffed by nurses, hundreds of whom died in service during the war. Thousands of women also served in the US Army nurse corps and the Navy nurse corps. US Army nurses were

sent ahead and assigned to the British expeditionary force. By June 1918 there were more than 3,000 American nurses in over 750 British-run hospitals within France.

Female Yeoman

The US Navy was short-handed at the beginning of World War I. Women were able to join the ranks of Yeomen, noncommissioned officers. Around 12,000 women enlisted in the Navy under this title “Yeoman (F)”. While many female recruits performed clerical duties, some worked as truck drivers, mechanics, radio operators, telephone operators, translators, camouflage artists and ammunition workers. These women held the same responsibilities as a male counterparts and received the same pay of \$28.75 per month.

The “Hello” Girls

The Signal corps female telephone operators unit recruited women who were bilingual in French and English to serve as telephone switchboard operators on the Western front. The women received physical training, observed strict military protocol, wore identity discs and worked very close to the front lines. These women became known for their bravery and focus under pressure.

Trench Warfare

World War I began at an incredibly innovative time period. Throughout the modern world, there were new forms of weaponry, travel, storage, and clothing being created that would go on to change the world forever. These new technologies advanced warfare to a place we had never seen before. The first world war broke from the lined battlefields of the past and headed into the trenches.

These trenches were intricately dug tunnel systems that had places to cook, bathrooms, and often had 3 separate lines of defense. On both fronts of the war, soldiers were entrenched for weeks in battles where each side took advances through the desolate “no-man's-land” (the space in between the enemies) in order to take the trench of the enemy. However, these trenches led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and long drawn out battles, where it did not seem that either side advanced.

As the war progressed, so did technology and the forms of warfare being used. WWI brought us a need for gas masks, as both sides began experimenting with chemical warfare. The war also brought new rifles, planes, flamethrowers, and new explosives.

Wilson in the War

Woodrow Wilson's second term in office was dominated by World War I. On April 2, 1917 Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany, stating, "the world must be made safe for democracy." America's participation helped bring about victory for the Allies, and on November 11, 1918 an armistice was signed by the Germans.

Wilson helped negotiate the Treaty of Versailles. The agreement included the charter for the League of Nations. The Senate voted on the Treaty first in November 1919 and again in March 1920 both times it failed to gain the 2/3 vote required for ratification. The treaty's defeat was partly blamed on Wilson's refusal to compromise with the Republicans.

The League of Nations held its first meeting in January 1920; the United States never joined the organization. However in December 1920, Wilson received a 1919 will peace prize for his efforts to include the covenant of the league of Nations in the treaty of Versailles.

Alvin C York

Alvin York is one of the most famous war heroes in American history. He was born in the upper Cumberland Plateau region of Tennessee. York was drafted into the US Army in 1917 when the U.S. had joined the war.

The next year, and the battle of the Argonne Forest, York reportedly killed 25 Germans and captured 132 prisoners almost single-handedly. For this act, he was awarded the medal of honor, becoming one of six soldiers from Tennessee who received that award during World War I.

A magazine called the "Saturday Evening Post" shared the story about your York. From that point on he was famous. Parades were held in his honor, and York was offered large amounts of money to make speeches or to endorse products. However, he refused to accept money for speaking about the war or writing about it because he thought it was wrong to profit from what he had done. "This uniform ain't for sale" he told someone once.

After the war York moved back to his native part of the state and devoted a large amount of time and energy to help create a new school today known as the Alvin C. York Institute. To help raise money for that school York eventually agreed to allow the movie to be made about his life called "Sergeant York."