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Comments
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For Additional

----WWI Centennial Events-----

100 years-ago in October, 26,000 American soldiers died on the battlefields of France in one of the final battles of WWI. Hundreds of them were from North Dakota. During the coming month, events will take place to commemorate sacrifices the young soldiers from North Dakota and across the country made in defense of freedom and liberty. Communications were poor in the early 1900s and initially it was believed about 700 North Dakota soldiers died in the,"war to end all wars". However, a new study by noted historian Barbara Handy-Marchello now puts the number of state residents who died at just under 1,400. "There were no computers, records were sparse, and many were destroyed or lost over the years. The 1,400 I have documented are those we have evidence died and the number might even be higher", according to Marcello-Handy.

Handy-Marchello says more than 120,000 soldiers from across the nation died in WWI and those who paid the ultimate price from North Dakota came from all corners of the state. She notes, "A surprising number of the North Dakotans who died were not even U.S. Citizens. Many were immigrants who came to the U.S. to homestead, join in the American dream; vote. Many were American Indians who they were committed to the war effort though they were not allowed to become citizens until 1924".

The study listing those who died by county is listed on the North Dakota World War 1 Centennial Committee web site. The web site address is www1cc.org/nd.

There will be major WWI programs across the state beginning mid-October. The North Dakota WWI Centennial Committee, funded in part by Humanities North Dakota, a non-profit, independent state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, will sponsor six free WWI programs leading up to the armistice ending WWI, 100-years ago on November 11. Susan Wefald or Darrell Dorgan will moderate each of the events.

Each free program will include a short WWI video, that provides an overview of WWI, a 30-minute talk by a noted WWI scholar, followed by time for audience Q & A and discussion of the significant and lasting changes in America and North Dakota caused by WWI. The six programs will begin October 16 and end on November 7.

- Williston - October 16, 7:30 pm, Williston Public Library, "World War I – America's March to War," Prof. Joseph Jastrzembski, Minot State University.

- Minot – October 17, 7:30 pm, Minot Public Library, “World War I – America’s March to War,” Prof. Joseph Jastrzembski, Minot State University.
- Grand Forks – October 23, 7:30 pm, University of North Dakota Student Union Lecture Bowl, “World War I –The Real Game of Thrones,” Prof. Al Berger, University of North Dakota.
- Fargo – October 24, 7:30 pm, Fargo Public Library, “Kaiser Bill in the Cow Pasture: The Great War at the Grassroots of North Dakota,” Prof. Tom Isern, North Dakota State University.
- Jamestown – October 30, 7:30 pm, Old Stutsman County Courthouse, “Warrior Doughboys,” Prof. Carol Barrett.
- Bismarck – November 7, 7:30 pm, North Dakota Heritage Center, “ ‘I Have seen my dear son’s resting place’: Gold Star Mothers Pilgrimages of World War I”, Historian Barbara Handy-Marchello.

Another remembrance will occur when the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra dedicates their October 20, 7:30 pm concert in the Belle Mehus Auditorium to those who served in World War One.

Dorgan notes, “We originated the idea of having bells toll and sirens ring on the morning of November 11 across the state and nation. The National WWI Centennial Commission is now asking all states to participate. We are asking communities across North Dakota to be involved in this tribute by flying flags at half-staff, ringing bells and blowing sirens the Morning of November 11 at 11:00 a.m. Further details on the event will be released shortly.”

North Dakota WWI committee members have also formally requested that County Veterans Services Officers work with local veteran’s organizations to read the names of those who died from their counties. Nearly 1,400 North Dakotans died in WWI, most in the last six months of the war in the trenches of France. The committee has requested the names of those who died from their county be read aloud from the steps of the county courthouse, or a place of public gathering in their county of residence, when the bells are done tolling.

Prairie Public Radio has agreed to provide several hours of air-time on November 11th for a conversation about WWI. Many stories written by our committee members about the war will likely be used. They are also considering some programming on television leading up to and on November 11.

Groups that have events planned to commemorate WWI are also asked to contact the WWI Centennial Committee web site, so the events can be listed. The web site manager is Mike Gayette at Gayette@gmail.com.

Dorgan says, "We look forward to working with groups to help publicize the events of 100 years ago to remember the ultimate sacrifice made by millions across the world and thousands from North Dakota."

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