Unit 6 Intro or Summary Overview
from Steve Wiegand:
Imperialism, Progressivism, Suffrage, WWI

Growing into the 20th Century: 1899–1918

In This Chapter

- Winning colonies from Spain
- Bringing in Teddy Roosevelt
- Improving conditions across America
- Getting America in the air and on the road
- Fighting for women's right to vote
- Hunting for jobs in the North, African American style
- Joining World War I with Woodrow Wilson

As the 1800s turned into the 1900s, America was entering young adulthood. It had just won a short and sloppily fought, but easily won, war with Spain. As a result, the country found itself, for the first time in its history, with an overseas empire formed by the colonies it won from Spain.

This chapter covers how America reacted to its new role as a force to be reckoned with in the world. I also explain how Americans handled changes in how they worked, how they got around, and how they governed themselves.

Here Today, Guam Tomorrow: Colonizing Spain's Lands

At the end of the nineteenth century, the American government suddenly had a lot more territory to take care of. There was Hawaii, which was formally annexed in 1898, and also Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, which were all won from Spain. Cuba was technically free, but because of restrictive treaties, it was in reality an American fiefdom.

On February 6, 1899, the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty with Spain that gave the U.S. Guam and Puerto Rico. The Spanish threw in the Philippines, too, after American negotiators offered $20 million for the islands. The Senate vote on the treaty was 57 to 27 — only two more than the two-thirds needed. The close vote mirrored a sharp division of opinion about whether it was a good idea for America to have colonies.

Arguing for and against American imperialism

Imperialism is a political idea that sounds something like this: "We can run your country better than you can because we have a better system of government." In practical terms, imperialists also view occupied territory as a sort of automatic teller machine for withdrawals of natural resources, or as a great place for strategically located military bases.

In June 1898, opponents to the idea of American colonies formed the Anti-Imperialist League, a group of strange bedfellows that included author Mark Twain, steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie, and labor leader Samuel Gompers. The folks who opposed imperialism all had different reasons for their opposition. Some believed it was un-American to impose American culture or government on other people. Others were afraid of "mingling" with "inferior" races. Laborers feared competition from poorly paid workers in other countries, and conservative business leaders feared foreign entanglements would divert capital.

Fighting with the Filipinos

After suffering under Spanish rule for 350 years, Filipinos weren't keen on a continuance of domination by a foreign country. Theirs was an antipathy that led to what is perhaps America's least-known war.

Led by Emilio Aguinaldo, Filipino *insurrectos* who had fought alongside U.S. troops against the Spanish now took up arms against their former allies. Aguinaldo commanded an army of about 80,000. Many of the insurrectos lacked weapons other than spears or machetes, so the Filipinos resorted to guerilla warfare and terrorism. American soldiers responded with a vengeance, torturing and executing prisoners and burning entire villages.

After four years of fighting, 4,230 Americans and more than 25,000 Filipinos had been killed. After Aguinaldo was captured and took an oath of allegiance to the United States, the fighting ended. A U.S. judge named William Howard Taft (who would later become the 27th president of the United States) took over as civilian governor of the islands. Taft gave the Filipinos wide latitude in governing themselves. Formal U.S. control didn't end until July 4, 1946.

Proponents, led by Theodore Roosevelt, who was then the governor of New York, argued that annexation would open the Orient for U.S. business. He said it would also prevent other nations from seizing the former Spanish colonies, and better position the United States as a world military power. Pres. William McKinley opined it was America's duty to "educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them," conveniently ignoring the fact that most Filipinos were already Roman Catholic. Such attitudes sparked a war with the newly liberated Filipinos. The war took several years and thousands of casualties on both sides before the United States prevailed. (See the nearby sidebar "Fighting with the Filipinos" for more on this war.)

Keeping a high profile in international affairs

To a large extent, the nasty fight in the Philippines soured the American appetite for imperialism. But protecting U.S. business interests overseas remained a priority, and a strong feeling still existed that the country needed to maintain a high profile in international affairs. No one felt that way more strongly than McKinley's new vice president, Theodore Roosevelt. McKinley's original vice president, Garret Hobart, had died in late 1899, and Republican Party leaders added the headstrong Roosevelt to McKinley's ticket in 1900 mainly as a way to shut him up in the obscurity of the vice presidency.

But on September 6, 1901, while visiting the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, McKinley was shot by a self-proclaimed anarchist. The president died a week later, and Roosevelt moved into the spotlight.

"Now look!" cried GOP political boss Mark Hanna of McKinley's death and Roosevelt's succession to the presidency. "That damned cowboy is President of the United States!"

Making a Lot of Noise and Carrying a Big Stick: Roosevelt Takes Office

Depending on whether you liked him or not, Theodore Roosevelt was either the energetic embodiment of the nation he led, or a macho blowhard who really should have taken more cold showers.

A puny, asthmatic child, Roosevelt literally built himself into a human dynamo with strenuous exercise and a nonstop personal regimen. His walrus mustache, thick round spectacles, and outsized teeth made him a political

cartoonist's dream (see Figure 13-1). However, his relative youth — at 43, he was the youngest president the country had ever had — his energy, and his unpredictability made him the bane of GOP political bosses.

Figure 13-1: Political cartoonists had fun with Theodore Roosevelt's appearance and personality.

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The Panama Canal

Roosevelt considered the construction of the Panama Canal his greatest accomplishment as president. And so did a lot of sea-goers. After all, it cut 7,800 miles off the voyage from New York to San Francisco by eliminating the necessity to sail around the tip of South America. The canal took about 10 years to build and cost $380 million. That cost broke down to about $7.5 million for each of its 50.72 miles. At the height of construction in 1913, more than 43,400 people were working on the canal; approximately 75 percent of these laborers were from the British West Indies. Hundreds of workers died from disease or accidents. About 240 million cubic yards of earth were moved during construction.

Roosevelt was fond of repeating an old African proverb that suggested "Speak softly, and carry a big stick; you will go far." In practice, however, he was much fonder of the stick than of speaking softly. A leading imperialist under McKinley, Roosevelt relished America's role as policeman to the world — and he took great advantage of his position as the top cop. In 1903, for example, Roosevelt encouraged Panama to revolt against Colombia so the United States could secure rights from the Panamanians to build the Panama Canal. In 1905, he brokered the treaty that settled a war between Russia and Japan, for which he won a Nobel Peace Prize.

Roosevelt set the tone for presidents who followed him. Both Taft and Woodrow Wilson had their own versions of *gunboat diplomacy* (using the force, or threat of force, to help negotiations along), particularly in Latin America.

For example, in 1912, Taft sent U.S. Marines to Nicaragua after a revolution there threatened American financial interests. In 1915, when Wilson was commander in chief, U.S. troops went to Haiti when revolution began to bubble; the troops stayed until 1934. Also in 1915, Wilson sent U.S. Army troops into Mexico under Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing. The troops were to chase Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa, who had raided American territory. The "punitive expedition" (as it was referred to by the War Department) almost triggered a war with Mexico and added to a widely held notion in the rest of the hemisphere that Uncle Sam was something of a bully. The expedition was also an example of a U.S. tendency to get involved in other countries' affairs. The tendency, which sprang sometimes from idealism and sometimes from pure self-interest, would last the rest of the twentieth century.

Consey Imp

The World Series

For 25 years, the National Baseball League had squashed all challenges to it as *the* only major organization when it came to the National Pastime. In 1901, however, a tough and savvy longtime minor-league executive named Byron Bancroft "Ban" Johnson started an eight-team league of his own, with franchises in major cities. Johnson's new American League lured many of the National League's top stars away with higher salaries. Forced to match salaries to keep its best players, the National League sued for peace and signed a National Baseball Agreement in January 1903, recognizing the American League as an equal.

As part of the deal, the leagues agreed to stage a post-season "world" championship between the pennant winners in each league. The first of these, a best-of-nine-games affair, was played in October 1903, between the National League's Pittsburgh Pirates and the American League's Boston Red Sox. To the shock of most baseball fans, the upstart league's Red Sox won, 5 games to 3.

Progressing toward Political and Social Reform

While America was busy reforming other countries, a burgeoning movement for reforms was in full swing at home, in virtually every business and social institution. At the core of the effort was a loose and diverse coalition of journalists, politicians, and single-cause crusaders who, because they sought progress, were called *Progressives.* These Progressives helped turn the first two decades of the century into what's known as the *Progressive Era.*

The "muckrakers" expose evil and initiate change

The first step in many of the causes undertaken by the Progressives was in exposing particular evils. This was often done by reporters and writers who looked into everything from machine politics to child labor to the preparation of food. Roosevelt dubbed them "muckrakers," after a character in the seventeenth century allegorical novel *Pilgrim's Progress*, who constantly cleaned up the moral filth around him.

While journalists had written exposés for years, the muckrakers' impact was magnified by the fact that they were often published in the fairly new medium: the popular (and cheap) magazine. The magazines included *McClure's, The Saturday Evening Post,* and the *Ladies' Home Journal.* The muckrakers included Ida Tarbell, who exposed the inner workings of the Standard Oil monopoly; Lincoln Steffens, who wrote about the corruption of many big-city governments; and Upton Sinclair, whose novel on meatpacking practices in Chicago, called *The Jungle,* made the entire country queasy.

The muckrakers were joined in their quest for reforms by political figures at the local, state, and national levels, such as California Governor and then-U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson, Mayor Tom Johnson of Cleveland, and Governor Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin.

When the Progressives couldn't prevail over entrenched corrupt political machines, they sought to change the rules, pushing for reforms such as

- **Direct primary elections:** Voters — not bosses — picked party nominees
- **The referendum:** Voters could repeal unpopular laws
- **The recall:** A means of removing officials before their terms expired
- **The initiative:** Allowed voters to circumvent balky legislatures and propose laws directly

Anyone for vegetables?

"There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust where workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it . . . a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put out poisoned bread for them, they would die, and then rats, bread and meat would go into the hoppers together."

— Upton Sinclair, writing in *The Jungle* about meatpacking practices in Chicago.

Improving working conditions — and other people's drinking habits

Other groups, meanwhile, fought to improve working conditions for women and children, secure welfare assistance for widows, and get insurance for workers who were hurt in industrial accidents. Spurred mainly by fundamentalist religious groups in the South and Midwest and women's temperance groups, a decade-long effort to abolish the production and sale of alcoholic beverages gained momentum, culminating in the Eighteenth Amendment — also referred to as "Prohibition" — which went into effect on January 16, 1920. The amendment was repealed in 1933.

18th amen

One of the Progressives' ideas was that people who made more money could afford to pay more taxes. A federal income tax had been tried before — once during the Civil War and once during the hard economic times of 1894 — but neither attempt was successful. In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court, on a 5 to 4 vote, struck down the 1894 effort as unconstitutional. The Sixteenth Amendment, which was pushed by Progressives, was proposed in 1909 and ratified in 1913. This amendment gave Congress the power to slap a federal tax on income, which it promptly did. Congress required a 1 percent tax on annual income above $4,000, and a 2 percent tax on income above $20,000. Of course, the rates have gone up since.

16th amend

The result of all this progress was impressive, and included

- **The Meat Inspection Act and Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906:** This act created new rules and regulations for the preparation and handling of food and medicine.
- **The breakup of monopolies:** The bank and beef monopolies ended in 1907 and the Standard Oil trust came to a halt in 1911.

- **The Federal Reserve Act of 1913:** This act divided the country into 12 districts, each with its own bank and board of directors. This division helped to better oversee banking practices and policies and prevent panics and bank failures.
- **The Seventeenth Amendment in 1913:** This amendment provided for the direct election of U.S. Senators instead of having them selected by state legislatures.

17th

Contracting Labor Pains

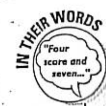
While the nation generally prospered in the early twentieth century, it was by no means a uniform prosperity. For every Rockefeller or Carnegie in 1900, there were hundreds of thousands of people making the average annual wage of $400 to $500 — about $100 less than was needed to maintain what was deemed a "decent" standard of living. To make matters worse, the working conditions for these people were often miserable.

Struggling in a changing workforce

A change was occurring in the U.S. workforce. As manufacturing expanded, jobs moved from the farm to the factory. In 1900, for example, there were about 10 million farm-related jobs as opposed to about 18 million nonfarm jobs. By 1920, there were still about 10 million farm-related jobs, but there were more than 30 million jobs not related to agriculture. Women held 20 percent of all manufacturing jobs, and 1.7 million children under the age of 16 had full-time jobs.

"Full-time" meant just that. In the Pittsburgh steel mills, for example, 10-year-old boys were paid $0.14 an hour to work 12 hours a day, six days a week. Factory conditions were often horrendous. Between July 1906 and June 1907, 195 people died in the steel mills of Pittsburgh — about one person every other day. In 1911, 146 workers, most of them women, were killed when a fire roared through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York. Casualties were high because fire exits had been locked to keep workers from sneaking out for breaks.

conditions



Bosses know best

"I beg of you not to be discouraged. The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for — not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian men to whom God in His infinite wisdom has given control of the property interests of this country."

— George F. Baer, president of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal & Iron Co., in response to a letter from a stockholder worried about a coal strike in 1902.

Initiating improvements to working conditions

Anxious to improve conditions, American workers increasingly tried to follow the example of the industrialists and combine into large groups — labor unions — to have strength through numbers. In 1904, the American Federation of Labor, which focused mainly on skilled workers, had 1.7 million members. The number grew to more than 4 million by 1920. But the unions often faced brutal reprisals from companies and law enforcement. In Ludlow, Colorado, a 1914 strike against the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company resulted in state militia and private police firing on strikers. Fourteen people were killed, eleven of which were children.

Sometimes the government intervened. In 1902, a strike of more than 800,000 coal miners dragged on for months when mine operators refused to negotiate. Fed up, President Roosevelt summoned both sides to Washington and threatened to send federal troops into the mines and appropriate the coal for the national good. Finally, a presidential commission granted the miners a raise and a shorter workday.

A more typical strike was the 1912 textile mill strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. After a state law required mill owners to limit the weekly hours of women and children to 54, the owners responded by speeding up production paces and cutting wages by $0.32 a week — the price of eight loaves of bread. The International Workers of the World organized a strike of more than 10,000 men and women. After 63 days that included beatings by police, the killing of a woman, the sending of strikers' children to other cities because strikers couldn't feed them, and a failed attempt to bomb one of the mills and frame the strike leaders, the owners gave in and granted the strikers all of their demands. Within a year, however, most of the concessions had been rescinded, and the pre-strike conditions returned. It would be at least another generation before unions became a national force.

"The Wobblies"

Formed in 1905 by socialists and militant unionists, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was a radical labor force that favored action rather than negotiations, and it often resorted to violence. For reasons somewhat unclear, the IWW was disparaged as "The Wobblies." Foes of the union also said IWW stood for "I Won't Work."

The group favored one all-encompassing union rather than many unions divided by craft or industry, and it targeted unskilled laborers, minorities, and women. Although it probably never had more than 150,000 members in any one year, the IWW had great influence on labor relations because of its zeal and the threat it posed to business owners. By the end of World War I, however, the union had become hugely unpopular because of its association with socialism, and it was all but defunct by 1920.

Transporting America

Unions weren't alone in their aspirations for improving the lives of working-class Americans. In Detroit, a generally unlikable, self-taught engineer named Henry Ford decided that everyone should have an automobile, and, thus, the right to go where they wanted, when they wanted. So Ford's company made one model — the Model T. You could have it in any color you wanted, Ford said, as long as it was black. And because of his assembly-line approach to putting them together, you could have it relatively cheaply.

Ford's plan was a good one. The price of a Model T dropped from $850 in 1908 to $290 by 1924. As prices dropped, sales went up. Sales went from 10,000 in 1909 to just under a million in 1921. Within two decades, Ford and other car-makers had indelibly changed American life. The average family could now literally get away from it all, which created a new sense of independence and self-esteem. Because of the availability of the automobile, new industries, from tire production to roadside cafes, sprang up. And by the end of the 1920s, it could be persuasively argued that the automobile had become the single most dominant element in the U.S. economy.

When it came to getting from here to there, others were looking up to the skies. In December 1903, two brothers who owned a bicycle shop in Dayton, Ohio, went to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. There they pulled off the world's first powered, sustained, and controlled flights with a machine they had built. Fearful of losing their patent rights, Orville and Wilbur Wright didn't go public with their airplane until 1908, by which time other inventors and innovators were also making planes. Unlike the automobile, however, the airplane's popularity didn't really take off until after its usefulness was proved in World War I.

Suffering for Suffrage

By the time the twentieth century arrived, American feminists had been seeking the right to vote for more than 50 years. Their desire was fanned even hotter in 1869, when African American males were given the right to vote through the Sixteenth Amendment, while women of all races were still excluded.

One place where women were increasingly included was in the workplace. As the country shifted away from a rural, agrarian society to an industrial, urban one, more and more women had jobs — eight million by 1910. Moreover, they were getting better jobs. In 1870, 60 percent of working women were in domestic service. By 1920, it was only 20 percent, and women made up 13 percent of the professional ranks. Women were getting out of the house for more than just jobs, too. In 1892, membership in women's clubs was about 100,000. By 1917, it was more than one million. And women's increasing independence was reflected in the fact that the divorce rate rose from 1 in every 21 marriages in 1880 to 1 in 9 by 1916.

Because women had always had nontraditional roles in the West, it wasn't surprising that Western states and territories were the first to give females the right to vote: Wyoming in 1869, Utah in 1870, Washington in 1883, Colorado in 1893, and Idaho in 1896. By 1914, all the Western states except New Mexico had extended the voting franchise to women.

By 1917, the suffrage movement was building momentum (see Figure 13-2). In July of that year, a score of suffragists tried to storm the White House. They were arrested and taken to the county workhouse. Pres. Woodrow Wilson was unamused, but sympathetic, and pardoned them. The next year, a constitutional amendment — the Nineteenth — was submitted to the states. When ratified in 1920, it gave women the right to vote in every state.

Jeannette Pickering Rankin

Jeanette Pickering Rankin was the first woman to serve in Congress and the only member who voted against both world wars. Born on a ranch near Missoula, Montana, in 1880, Rankin graduated from the University of Montana in 1902 and was a social worker before becoming a field secretary for the National American Woman Suffrage Association. After Montana approved the vote for women in 1914, Rankin decided in 1916 to run for one of the state's two seats in the House of Representatives as a Republican, and won. As a congresswoman, she was one of 56 members of Congress who voted against President Wilson's call for a war resolution in 1917. As a result, she lost the race for a U.S. Senate seat in 1918, moved to Georgia, and devoted her energies to pacifist organizations. In 1940, Rankin returned to Montana, where she ran again for Congress and won — in time to be the lone member of either house to vote against war with Japan in 1941. She didn't run for reelection and died in California in 1973 at the age of 92.

Of Rankin's vote against two world wars, John F. Kennedy said: "Few members of Congress have ever stood more alone while being true to a higher honor and loyalty."

Hands off!

"A woman's body belongs to herself alone. It does not belong to the United States of America or any other government on the face of the earth."

— Margaret Sanger, who first coined the term "birth control" and founded the first birth control clinic in the United States in 1916. In 1921, she organized the American Birth Control League, the forerunner of Planned Parenthood.

Figure 13-2: Women marching for the right to vote.

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Despite the significance of the Nineteenth Amendment, many leaders of the women's movement recognized that the vote alone wouldn't give women equal standing with men when it came to educational, economic, or legal rights.

"Men are saying, perhaps, 'thank God this everlasting women's fight is over,'" said feminist leader Crystal Eastman after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. "But women, if I know them, are saying, 'now at last we can begin.'"

Leaving the South: African Americans Migrate to Northern Cities

Women weren't the only Americans on the move. Between 1914 and 1918, more than 500,000 African Americans left the farms of the South for jobs in Northern cities. The movement was part of the "Great Migration," which stretched from the 1890s to the 1960s, and eventually resulted in more than 6 million black people leaving the South.

This migration was spurred first by the Jim Crow laws, the lynchings, and the poverty of the post–Civil War South. Then, as the war in Europe simultaneously sparked U.S. industrial expansion and cut off the flow of immigrant workers, Northern jobs opened up by the thousands. Henry Ford, for example, offered to pay the astronomical sum of $5 a day in his plants, and despite his racist views, he hired blacks. The black populations of Northern cities swelled. In Chicago, for example, the African American community grew from 44,000 in 1910 to 110,000 by 1920.

But moving North didn't mean that African Americans left racism behind. Many Northern whites resented their new neighbors. The resentment was fueled in 1915 when the wildly popular new movie, *The Birth of a Nation,* portrayed blacks as deranged and dangerous creatures who lorded their emancipation over white Southerners. Nor was there much interest in black issues among Progressive leaders. When a delegation of black leaders met with Pres. Woodrow Wilson in 1914 to protest segregation in federal offices, he all but pushed them out the door.

The unrest led to race riots. In 1917 in East St. Louis, Illinois, white rioters went on a rampage in the black community. When it was over, 39 blacks and 9 whites were dead. In the summer of 1919, more than 25 race riots broke out in cities across the country. The worst was in Chicago, where an incident at a segregated swimming beach sparked a six-day riot that resulted in 38 people dead and more than a thousand left homeless by riot-sparked fires. The beachfront riots didn't stop until federal troops were called in.

Still, when President Wilson called on Americans to "help make the world safe for democracy" in 1917, more than 375,000 African Americans entered the military. "If this is our country," explained black leader W.E.B. DuBois, "then this is our war." (For more information, check out *African American History For Dummies* by Ronda Racha Penrice, Wiley.)

W.E.B. DuBois

William Edward Burghart DuBois was decidedly not what most white Americans thought of when they thought about black Americans. He was born in 1868 to a poor but respected family in a Massachusetts town with a population that was less than one percent black; he had degrees from Harvard and the University of Berlin; he became one of the country's leading sociologists; and he was an eloquent orator and stylish writer.

DuBois was best known for his forceful disagreements with another African American leader, Booker T. Washington. These disagreements were most famously expressed in DuBois's 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk.* Washington stressed self-help and material gain over seeking equal legal and social rights with whites, but DuBois believed Washington's approach would only continue black oppression. In 1905, DuBois took a leading role in the Niagara Movement, the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which he helped found in 1909. Disillusioned with the direction of the NAACP, he resigned in 1934. From 1934 to 1944, he was head of the Department of Sociology at Atlanta University and has been called the Father of American Sociology. He died in Ghana in 1963, at the age of 95.

The War to End All Chapters

Theodore Roosevelt had been president nearly eight years by the time of the 1908 election, having filled most of the assassinated McKinley's second term and winning his own term in 1904. Even though there were no term limits to stop him, Roosevelt decided not to run in 1908. Instead, he gave his blessing to William Howard Taft, a fellow Republican. But in 1912, Roosevelt became restless and decided to run against Taft, as the candidate of the Progressive, or "Bull Moose," Party. Americans ended up choosing the Democrat in the race, a scholarly former president of Princeton University and son of the South named Thomas Woodrow Wilson.

Progressive in his domestic policies, Wilson was something of a cautious imperialist abroad. He subscribed to the idea that America had a leading role to play in world affairs; he just didn't want to fight about it. The country did get embroiled in a few Latin American fights, and Wilson did send troops into Mexico in 1916 after Mexican revolutionaries led by Pancho Villa raided into American soil. But as the European powers squared off in 1914 in what was to be four years of mind-numbingly horrific war, America managed to somewhat nervously mind its own business. Wilson, in fact, won reelection in 1916 using the phrase "he kept us out of war."

The great "Spanish" flu of 1918

Despite conflict and war, civilians and soldiers around the world had at least one thing in common in 1918 — a killer flu. Erroneously dubbed "Spanish Influenza" because it was believed to have started in Spain, it more likely started at U.S. Army camps in Kansas and may not have been a flu virus at all. A 2008 study by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases suggested bacteria might have caused the pandemic.

Whatever caused it, it was devastating. Unlike normal influenza outbreaks, whose victims are generally the elderly and the young, the Spanish Flu often targeted healthy young adults. By early summer, the disease had spread around the world. In New York City alone, 20,000 people died. Western Samoa lost 20 percent of its population, and entire Inuit villages in Alaska were wiped out. By the time it had run its course in 1921, the flu had killed from 25 million to 50 million people around the world. More than 500,000 Americans died, which was a greater total than all the Americans killed in all the wars of the twentieth century.

As time passed, however, the country began to side more often with Britain, France, and other countries that were fighting Germany. The sinking of the British passenger ship, *Lusitania,* by a German submarine in 1915, which resulted in the deaths of 128 Americans, inflamed U.S. passions against "the Huns." Propagandistic portrayals of German atrocities in the relatively new medium of motion pictures added to the heat. And finally, when it was revealed that German diplomats had approached Mexico about an alliance against the United States, Wilson felt compelled to ask Congress for a resolution of war against Germany. He got it on April 6, 1917.

Organizing the war effort

The U.S. military was ill-prepared for war on a massive scale. Only about 370,000 men were in the Army and National Guard combined. Through a draft and enlistments, however, that number swelled to 4.8 million in all the military branches by the end of World War I.

At home, about half of the war's eventual $33 billion price tag was met through taxes; the rest was funded through the issuance of war bonds. Organized labor, in return for concessions such as the right to collective bargaining, agreed to reduce the number of strikes. Labor shortages drove wages up, which in turn drove prices up. But demand for goods and services because of the war soared, and the economy hummed along, despite government efforts to "organize" it.

In Europe, however, no one was humming. American troops, like their European counterparts before them, found that modern warfare was anything but inspiring. The first U.S. troops were fed into the lines as much to shore up the morale of the Allies as anything else. But by the time the Germans launched their last desperate offensive, in the spring of 1918, more than 300,000 American troops had landed in France. By the war's end in November, the number of Yanks had swelled to 1.4 million.

Led by Maj. Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing, a celebrated veteran of the Spanish-American and Philippines wars, the U.S. forces, known as the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) fought off efforts by Allied commanders to push the AEF into a subordinate role as replacement troops.

Starting with the battles of Cantigny, Chateau-Thierry, and Belleau Wood in France, the AEF proved itself an able force. In September 1918, the Americans launched an attack on a German bulge in the lines near Verdun, France. U.S. and French troops captured more than 25,000 prisoners, and the German military's back was all but broken. At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, Germany called it quits, and the fighting stopped.

American losses — 48,000 killed in battle, 56,000 lost to disease — seemed trifling compared to the staggering costs paid by other countries. Germany lost 1.8 million people; Russia, 1.7 million; France, 1.4 million; Austria-Hungary, 1.2 million; and Britain, 950,000. "The War to End All Wars," as it was called, turned out to be just another test of humans' aptitude for killing other humans in large quantities.