



100th Anniversary of World War I:

Armistice

11 November 1918

This month in military history

- 1775 U.S. Marine Corps Established
- 1804 Rock River Country ceded to U.S.
- 1871 1st machinery for RIA ordered
- 1901 U.S. Navy in the Philippines
- 1904 Army War College opens
- 1941 Coast Guard put under Navy control for WWII
- 1943 Teheran Conference
- 1947 Only flight of the "Spruce Goose"
- 1952 First hydrogen bomb tested
- 1973 War Powers Act ratified



As A Matter of Fact

Dr. John Emerson was a surgeon posted at Fort Armstrong in 1833. He, along with his slave, traveled to several other posts in addition to Fort Armstrong. His slave was none-other than Dred Scott, famous for his suit for freedom in the Dred Scott Case. Despite losing the case, Mr. Scott's legacy paved the way for the 13th Amendment.

November Trivia!

- ① What is the only aircraft to use the M102 105 MM Howitzer as a standard weapon?
- ② How many 280 MM atomic guns were produced over the program's lifetime?
- ③ What was the name of the steamboat that struck the 1856 Rock Island-Davenport bridge?

For answers, go to the announcement section on the ASC History SharePoint site.

Last Month's Answers:

- ① The Clock Tower (205)
- ② The Black Hawk War
- ③ SGT Henry N. J. Gunther

As winter of 1918 approached the Allied Commanders began working on plans for continued offensives in the spring of 1919. The conclusion of the war was still uncertain; however, the German led Central Powers were showing signs of exhaustion. Bulgaria had already sued for peace signing an armistice with the Allies and it appeared that the rest of Germany's allies were not far behind. Despite the Russian Empire leaving the war a year earlier, Germany was still struggling to supply the manpower needed to hold the Allies back on the Western Front. The Germans were also short food, and other crucial supplies they so desperately needed to continue fighting.

On 4 October 1918, German and Austrian representatives made contact with President Wilson, hoping to begin peace talks based on what he had laid out in his *Fourteen Points* speech. Initially, Wilson asked the Germans to confirm their acceptance of his stated conditions. However, in his subsequent notes, after he consulted the other Allied leaders, his tone became more demanding by requiring the Germans to cease unrestricted submarine warfare and to recognize the military supremacy of the Allies. Additionally, France wanted control of Alsace-Lorraine, while Britain's main concern was shutting down the German Navy.

The Allies also need a breather. They agreed that the terms needed to be severe enough to prevent any renewal of hostilities following the armistice. Key Allied leaders met in Paris from 29 October to 4 November to discuss the final terms they would offer to Germany. Meanwhile, October had been a hard month for Berlin. The Germans were losing on all fronts. General Ferdinand Foch's offensive forced the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line while the American troops were fighting their way through the Argonne Forest. To the East France and Britain were on the cusp of

breaking through the Balkans and threatening an end to the Young Turk government. The new Turkish ministry readily accepted an armistice on 31 October.

General Erich Ludendorff and General Paul von Hindenburg vehemently opposed Wilson's demand to abandon the U-Boat war. Both men took up the matter with Emperor Wilhelm II on 26 October. The altercation ended with Ludendorff's resignation. Berlin had no other option than to accept negotiations.

Germany's appeal for peace early in the month severely damaged the morale of its soldiers. Commanders reported total breakdown of discipline and noticed Bolshevism had spread among the troops. Influenza was racing through the German lines. At home, hungry German citizens were calling for peace at any price.

The unrest in Germany peaked on 4 November, a day known as "Red Monday." Councils of both workers and soldiers usurped authority throughout Northern Germany. They also took over railways, bridges, and depots behind the Western Front, distracting German troops on the front line. The revolution reached Berlin on 9 November, prompting Wilhelm II to abdicate and flee for Holland. The uprising put Germany in an even worse position to negotiate for peace.

All three major Allied leaders were satisfied with the results of the Paris Conference. The peace terms were largely based on Wilson's *Fourteen Points*. Prime Minister Lloyd George was granted his wish to restrict the German's on the seas as well, allowing Britain to maintain its control of European naval supremacy. General Foch was to oversee the military conditions of surrender. The leaders agreed that Germany should evacuate France, Belgium, and Alsace-Lorraine.

Furthermore, Germany would be required to evacuate the territories in the east and return to its original 1914 borders. To restrict their land and air capabilities, the Germans were to hand over artillery, aircraft, railway locomotives, and wagons. The German colonies would fall under Allied control and the British blockade on the seas would continue. On 5 November, the United States' Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, communicated these terms to the Germans.

On 6 November, the Germans contacted Foch. The next morning, the German delegation crossed the French lines into the Compiègne Forest. As the Germans heard the terms in Foch's railway car, they were shocked at the severity and feared the conditions would further debilitate their ability to control the domestic discontent. They had no choice, however, but to accept. Their only negotiable success was to reduce the amount of weapons turned over by a few thousand.

At 0500 on 11 November, the Germans signed the final agreement to cease all hostilities. The fighting of the "Great War" would come to an end 6 hours later, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

One year later, President Wilson proclaimed November 11th as Armistice Day, stating:

"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..."

Armistice Day continued to be observed until it was renamed to Veterans Day in 1954, with the intention of honoring all veterans who have served.

For answers to trivia and more visit: <https://asc.aep.army.mil/sites/Historian/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Brought to you by your friendly ASC History Office. For more copies or any history related needs just call or stop by Bldg 390, BSMT SW!
George Eaton, Command Historian Kevin Braafladt, Deputy Historian Mark Struve, Assistant Historian