

In the fall of 1918 the University of North Dakota suffered the unimaginable loss of twenty-seven members of its Student Army Training Corps. These young men were victims of the Flu Pandemic that swept through Grand Forks during that dreadful fall and all but one died on the university campus during October and November of 1918. One hundred years ago the University of North Dakota promised to never forget these young men. The University has kept her promise. A complete list of names of the S.A.T.C. members who died on campus during the Flu Pandemic has now been made public and an exhibit to honor these young men is located on the fourth floor of the Chester Fritz Library in the Special Collections Department. I hope that this website and the S.A.T.C. exhibit will convey the sentiment of remembrance I want to bring to your attention.

I want to thank the History Department for their support in aiding my research, their generous funding of the S.A.T.C. memorial exhibit (in Special Collections on the fourth floor of Chester Fritz Library at UND) and their assistance in fulfilling a one hundred year old promise. I am optimistic that this website and the S.A.T.C. exhibit will, in fact, honor these young men and also serve as a memorial for those who “offered their lives on the altar of their country and died in its service and in its defense as truly and as nobly as if it were on the field of battle.” You may be wondering what was the significance of the Student Army Training Corps?

(to see more detailed information on the regulations of the different sections please refer to the link "[SATC Regulations](#)" on the home page).

There is, to be sure, conflicting information concerning the number of deaths that occurred in the S.A.T.C. during the fall of 1918. Because their names were never fully disclosed the actual number of deaths has fluctuated. Is the total number seven, eight, twenty-six, twenty-nine, thirty-two or thirty-three? In order to determine a starting point for a base number of S.A.T.C.

deaths we need to go back to the authoritative and contemporaneous source. The authoritative figure for this research is Dr. Orin Grant Libby. Libby was a Professor of History and also the Chairman of the University War Committee. In October of 1919 Dr. Libby reported the number of deaths at twenty-nine.¹ The first published record of this death count appears many months earlier in *The Quarterly Journal* of January 1919; “out of 476 men under military orders, we had 320 cases of influenza, 60 of pneumonia, and 29 deaths.”² In addition, there are two other primary records referring to this number that are unpublished. The first is a drawing created by Dr. Libby, date unknown, found in Special Collections (Kane: Correspondence/Controversy 1922, Box 7 Folder 431-7-36). This drawing, titled *Called To Account*, clearly shows that Libby believed there to be twenty-nine deaths in the S.A.T.C. camp during the 1918 flu epidemic [[hit your back button and click on Libby’s drawing](#)]. The other unpublished source is a document retrieved from the Department of Military Science/Army ROTC. This document too is not dated but it is believed to have been created in the summer of 1921. It states that “the influenza epidemic broke out in the S.A.T.C. at the University about October 8th, 1918 and continued with almost unaltered violence until the first of November [[hit your back button and click on the History of Military Department, University of North Dakota](#)]. A death toll of 29 students resulted in the military detachments from this violent and unexpected plague.”³ Until October of 2017, the number twenty-nine has been repeatedly used since 1918.

1. Orin G. Libby, “The Work of the Institutions of Higher Education,” ed. A.J. Ladd. *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 10, no. 1 (October 1919): 80.

2. A. J. Ladd, ed., “The Influenza at the University,” *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 9, no. 2 (January 1919): 190.

3. “History of Military Department University, North Dakota.” Unknown author, unknown date, unpublished article in possession of the author.

In 1958 Louis G. Geiger recorded that “the epidemic reached tragic proportions on campus; 320 of the 470 trainees became ill and 29 died, six on one awful day.”⁴ Likewise, in 1966 Elwyn B. Robinson wrote that “29 of the university’s 473 students died in three weeks, it had been a tragic experience.”⁵ Similarly in 1983, D. Jerome Tweton noted that “of the 470 military trainees on campus at the time, 320 became ill and because of the lack of medical personnel and facilities on campus 29 of them died.”⁶ Six years later, in 1989, Stephen L. McDonough shared with his readers that “476 SATC men were housed in the Grand Forks Campus and that conditions of the University must have been a nightmare. Twenty-nine SATC men died, six on one terrible day.”⁷ In 2009 another UND History professor, William Caraher, repeated Geiger’s figures and wrote “320 of the 470 cadets were ill and tragically, 29 of these students died;” Dr. Caraher reminded us that “Geiger reported that no other university campus had a worse record” of S.A.T.C. deaths.⁸ Lastly, and most recently, on the 134th anniversary of UND’s founding, the Founders Day 2017 publication pulled from material extracted from Geiger’s work and informed its readers that “the epidemic claimed the lives of 29 trainees at UND and prompted the cancellation of the remainder of the fall term.”⁹ It becomes clear that Libby’s number of twenty-nine is authoritative and historians for decades have trusted his account.

4. Louis G. Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains: A History of the University of North Dakota 1883-1958* (Grand Forks: University Press, 1958), 297-298.

5. Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Fargo: Institute for Regional Studies, 1995), 360.

6. D. Jerome Tweton, *The University of North Dakota at 100*, ed. Robert P. Wilkins (Grand Forks: University Press, 1983), 71.

7. Stephen L. McDonough, *The Golden Ounce: A Century of Public Health in North Dakota* (Grand Forks: University Printing Center, 1989), 93-94.

8. William Caraher, “The Flu, The University, and the Department of History,” *Archive for the Archaeology of the Mediterranean World*, entry posted September 28, 2009, <https://mediterraneanworldarchive.wordpress.com/page/2/?s=Libby> (accessed March 22, 2017).

9. “Founders Day 2017: 134th Anniversary,” *100 Years Ago: 1917*, (Grand Forks: University Press, 2017), 24.