

Consumption is now commonly known as Tuberculosis. Getting tuberculosis was a death sentence—and a drawn-out one at that. Sufferers of the infectious disease which typically attacks the lungs, had an average of three years to live. But those years would be filled with coughing and chest pains.

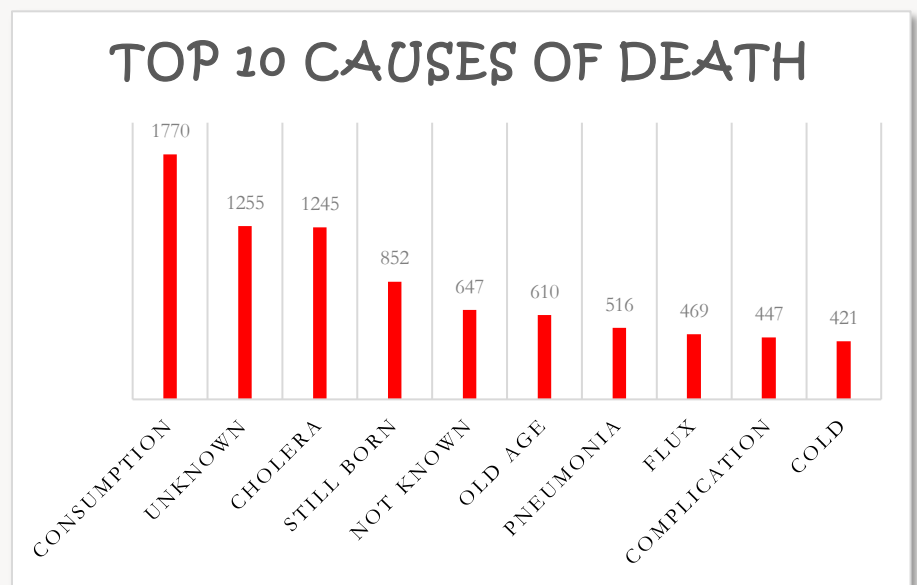
Causes:

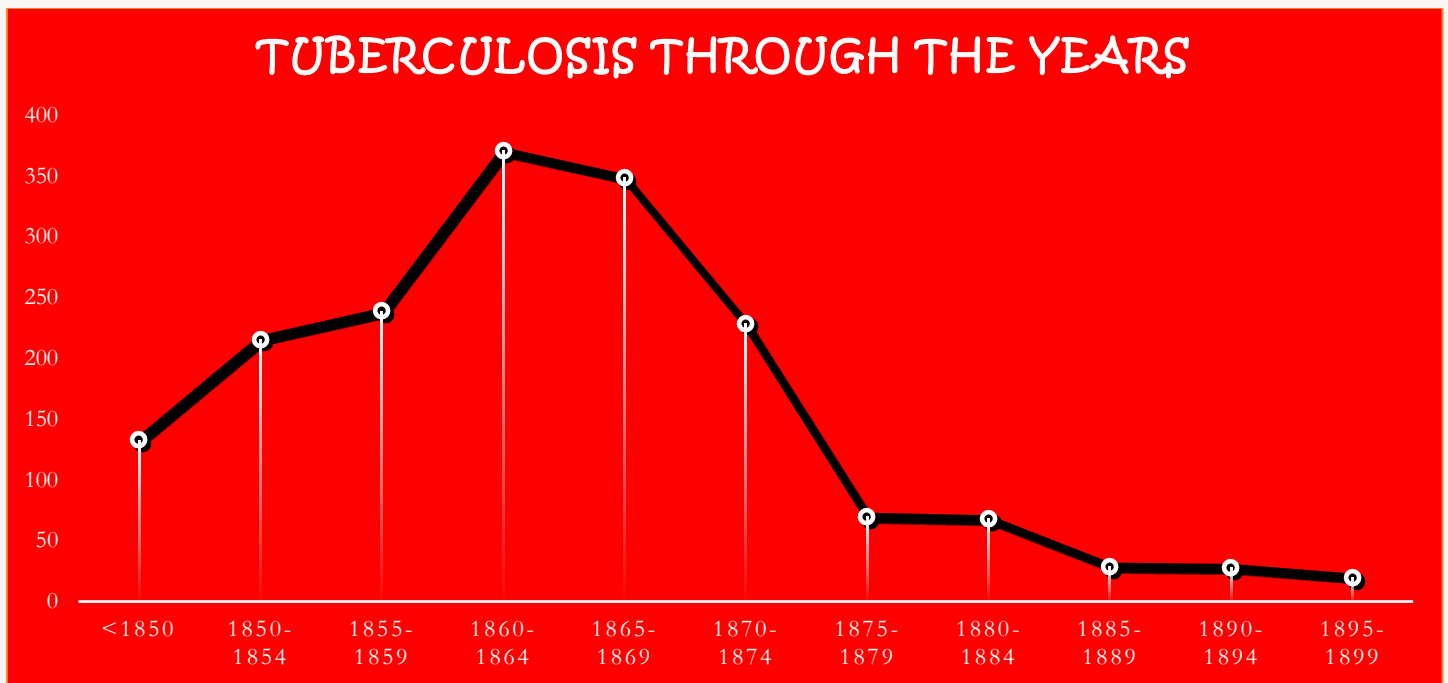
- Overcrowding
- Poor nutrition
- Lack of hygiene and sanitation
- Lack of medical care

Consumption was probably the most common killer of American colonial adults. But then a major reversal occurred and death rates began to fall. No one knows exactly why, but three explanations have been advanced:

- Improved socioeconomic conditions that led, to better nutrition and living/working standards
- Application of primitive public health measures
- Realization that tuberculosis was probably an infectious disease and the beginning of isolation of contagious diseases in hospitals and sanatoriums.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, long after death rates from tuberculosis had begun their remarkable downward trend, two historic events occurred that had tremendous subsequent impact on the diagnosis and management of the disease. In 1882, Robert Koch discovered *M. tuberculosis* and in 1895, Wilhelm Konrad Röntgen discovered X-rays. These scientific triumphs were quickly applied to clinical medicine, so that around 1905, the time our historical narrative begins, doctors could make a precise diagnosis of consumption by demonstrating abnormalities in a patient's chest radiograph and finding tubercle bacilli in his or her sputum.





As you can see tuberculosis is Nashville as starting to decline while the Civil war was just beginning in 1861-1865. Click below to see the actual news clippings as the citizens of Nashville begin to deal with the influx of soldier deaths.

[Newspaper clips](#)

A Romantic Disease or the White Death?

The Great White Plague and the White Death, where the “white” was due to the extreme anemic pallor of those infected. The slow progress of the disease allowed for a "good death" as sufferers could arrange their affairs. The disease began to represent spiritual purity and temporal wealth, leading many young, upper-class women to purposefully pale their skin to achieve the consumptive appearance. British poet Lord Byron wrote, "I should like to die from consumption", helping to popularize the disease as the disease of artists. George Sand doted on her phthisic lover, Frédéric Chopin, calling him her "poor melancholy angel".

Our next event is now posted at: [***Nashville City Cemetery Association, Inc.***](#)

Reference Articles

<https://time.com/3086432/scariest-health-issues-1900/>

<https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/full/10.1164/rccm.200402-140OE>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_tuberculosis