Gemienschaft and Gisellschaft Question:

I was reading an article this week and was interested in a story of a man in the 16th century in Germany. As sociology students we've long suspected that as language changes, our societal values do too (remember the Sapire Worf hypothesis?). Let me tell you the story:   
It begins in a garret in the late 17th century in the Swiss university town of Basel. Inside, there's a dedicated student living some 60 miles away from home. He stops turning up to his lectures. And his friends come to visit, and they find him dejected and feverish, having heart palpitations, strange sores breaking out on his body. Doctors are called, and they think it's so serious that prayers are said for him in the local church.  
  
And it's only really when they're preparing to return this young man home so that he can die that they realize what's going on. Because once they lift him onto the stretcher, his breathing becomes less labored. By the time he's got to the gates of his hometown, he's almost entirely recovered. And that's when they realize that he's been suffering from a very powerful form of homesickness. Well in 1688, a young doctor, Yohannes Hoffa, heard of this case and others like it and christened the illness nostalgia. The last person to die from nostalgia was an American soldier fighting during the First World War in France.  
  
Question: How is it possible that you could die from nostalgia less than a hundred years ago? But today, not only does the word mean something different, a sickening for a lost time, rather than a lost place. But homesickness itself is seen as less serious. This change seems to have happened in the early 20th century but why? (hint: look at the title of this lesson) You may comment or add to each others' responses.