Influenza 1918 Primary Sources
New National Recording Registry Entries

Dr Dre, Glen Campbell, Mr Rogers, Selena and the Village People are featured in this year’s class.
ECHOES of the GREAT WAR
AMERICAN EXPERIENCES OF WORLD WAR I

EXPLORE THE EXHIBIT
Influenza Pandemic

Photographer Lewis Hine joined the American Red Cross in 1918 and then did freelance photography for the organization through the 1930s. By the time this photograph was taken in July of 1918, nearly 24,000 American Red Cross nurses were enrolled for military service. A devastating challenge emerged the same year in the form of an influenza pandemic that would eventually claim an estimated 20 to 50 million lives, more than were killed by enemy weapons. The Red Cross continued working with the U.S. Public Health Service to provide nurses and motor corps workers until the pandemic receded in 1919.
"I was down for a week"

The Great War did not cause the epidemic of influenza that swept the world in 1918 and killed more than 30 million people. However, the war likely helped to spread the disease, an especially deadly strain of flu, with its crowding of troops in training camps and trenches and the flow of people across oceans and borders. In this letter home, American Red Cross volunteer Dorothy Kitchen O’Neill describes how she and forty other women came down with influenza on the voyage to Europe; four of those women died. Dorothy wrote to her family on October 10, 1918: "I was down for a week and have only been up for two days so feel shaky."

Dorothy Kitchen O’Neill to “Dearest Family,” October 10, 1918. Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (154.00.00)
New National Recording Registry Entries

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Digital Collections

Subject
- War & Military: 4
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- African American History: 1
- Sources: 1
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- More Subjects

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- Digital Collections
- Serial and Government Publications Division
  - Frederick Douglass Newspapers, 1847 to 1874: 1
  - Japanese-American Internment Camp Newspapers, 1942 to 1946: 1

Collection Items
- Chronicling America: 153,638 Items
- Directory of US Newspapers in American Libraries: 587 Items
- Frederick Douglass Newspapers, 1847-1874: 4,682 Items
- Japanese-American Internment Camp Newspapers, 1942-1946: View

View Options: Gallery
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The Little Innkeeper of Dampicourt had no time last week to clean and polish up her tiny tavern, which stands at the fork in the roads where the traffic from France turns up toward Brussels or down toward Luxembourg. The metal on the little bar sadly needed shining, but she had to stand out at her door and wave her apron as the Americans went by, wave her apron and cry "Bonjour, Monsieur" at every truck and ambulance, at every doughboy and Marine in the endless procession leading to the Rhine.

It was the procession she had promised her downhearted neighbors they should see. The flight from the salient had come and gone, but the battle only seemed to have begun. There were a dozen tasks to perform, and she hadn't had a proper sit-down meal in days. "I am on a mission," she told her landlady in the next room. "I have been sent to take care of the American troops, and I shall get back to America unless it reaches the transport by wireless, that not a single cackle shall enter the port of New York through the ruse of concealing himself in the under-skirt of some member of the American Air Service.

Knotty Ash, before the war a brewery surrounded by scattered clusters of semi-detached cottages, a development project under the supervision of the Municipal Corporation, is now a collection of warehouses and barracks. The brewery was the only place in town with a roof, but the roof has been torn up by shelling, and the floor is strewn with the debris of a thousand broken bottles. The walls are covered with graffiti, and the windows are shattered. The only thing that remains is the name, "Knotty Ash," painted in large letters on the side of the building.
Topics in Chronicling America

Chronicling America provides free access to millions of historic American newspaper pages. Listed here are topics widely covered in the American press of the time. We will be adding more topics on a regular basis. To find out what’s new, sign up for Chronicling America’s weekly notification service, that highlights interesting content on the site and lets you know when new newspapers and topics are added. Users can use the icons at the lower-left side of the Chronicling America Web page to subscribe. If you would like to suggest other topics, use the Ask a Librarian contact form available on the Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room site. Dates show the approximate range of sample articles.

- Alphabetical list of Topics Pages
- by subject category
- by date range
Influenza Epidemic of 1918 (Spanish Flu): Topics in Chronicling America

Between the spring of 1918 and 1919, a virulent and fatal influenza swept the United States. This guide provides information for researching the "Influenza Epidemic of 1918 (Spanish Flu)" in the Chronicling America digital collection of historic newspaper.

"Spanish Flu" Sweeps the Country, Killing Millions!

Between the spring of 1918 and the spring of 1919 a highly virulent and fatal influenza sweeps the country in three waves, killing the youngest and the strongest, devastating entire communities. Read more about it!

The information in this guide focuses on primary source materials found in the digitized historic newspapers from the digital collection Chronicling America.

The timeline below highlights important dates related to this topic and a section of this guide provides some suggested search strategies for further research in the collection.

TIMELINE

Spring 1918 - Spring 1919: Three waves of highly virulent and fatal influenza sweep the country. The fall-winter wave is the deadliest for the US. The pandemic kills millions and devastates entire communities.
Influenza Epidemic of 1918 (Spanish Flu): Topics in Chronicling America

Search Strategies & Selected Articles

The links below provide access to a sampling of articles from historic newspapers that can be found in Chronicling America. You can further explore the topic of the "Influenza Epidemic of 1918 (Spanish Flu)" using the following search strategies:

- Use the following terms in combination, proximity, or as a phrase:
  Spanish influenza, Spanish flu, grip, la grippe, plague, epidemic, pandemic, Pfeiffer’s bacillus (Pfeiffer’s bacillus will also reveal results)
- It is important to use a specific date range if looking for articles for a particular event in order to narrow your results. The date range from 1918 to 1920 will yield the best results.

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM CHRONICLING AMERICA

- "Epidemic of Grip and Pneumonia"

- "Camp Dodge Leads in Health"
  The Tomahawk (White Earth, MN), June 27, 1918, Page 2, Image 2, col. 3.

- "Today the Kaiser is Ill"

- "Phipps Institute Identifies Germ of Spanish Grip"
  Evening Public Ledger (Philadelphia, PA), September 20, 1918, Page 1, Image 1, col. 1.

- "Influenza Claims Victim in Capital"

- "Influenza Will Spread West, Is Belief"
  El Paso Herald (El Paso, TX), September 27, 1918, Home Edition, Page 1, Image 1, col. 6.

- "Medical Science's Newest Discoveries about the 'Spanish Influenza'"
Medical Science's Newest Discoveries About the "Spanish Influenza"

How the First Real Epidemic of the World War Spread from the German Trenches—and Why Science Believes It Has Averted All Danger of Catastrophic Pestilences Such as Have Followed Many of the Great Wars of the Past

By Dr. Gordon Henry Hirshberg, A. M., M. D.

The Washington times, [volume], October 06, 1918, NATIONAL EDITION, The American Weekly Section, Image 22
About The Washington times, [volume] (Washington [D.C.]) 1902-1939
How About the Farmer?

The end of the fourth Liberty Loan campaign is close at hand, and the South has not fully met its share of this national obligation.

There have been many subscriptions, and many of them were large. There were some which represented merely the surplus money of wealthy folk; there were many which meant real self-denial by the poor. But on the whole, we have not made a sacrifice. We have said to ourselves: "I cannot spare any money just now," and turned the canvassers away with a small subscription or with nothing at all.

Now, let us think this thing over, you and I. This is our war. Our boys are fighting in it, our country is backing it. It is just as much our war as that the Germans were Bombarding Charleston or Savannah or Brunswick or New Orleans and threatening to march inland, burning and destroying, and murdering innocent women and children. It isn't a far-away war in Europe. It is our war.

Let us consider this bond issue as a cold-blooded business proposition, if you like. Suppose we were stockholders in a big business house which had been waging a great and expensive fight for success. Suppose our rivals had fought us hard and had almost won the victory. Suppose that we had poured every effort into the business and were gaining the advantage, that we were right on the eve of permanent success—and our money ran out!

Let us suppose that the president and directors you had elected to run that business called us as stockholders for more money to win this fight; that they assured us and proved to us that additional funds would win, and pay us a handsome return. Would we button up our pocketbooks and go along with them? Not a chance! And yet we are doing precisely that when we refuse to subscribe.

The man who is not prepared to subscribe his share of the bond issue is not a true American. He must not be allowed to say that he is, while he refuses to do his part of the work. We cannot be and remain a great nation unless each and all of us do our full part in the bond drive.
Quarantine Is Lifted

The ban is off, yet the danger is not over, and I kindly ask every one to join in a campaign to keep this influenza under the same stringent submission you would the Kaiser, for just as surely it will get you as the Kaiser, if you give it a chance.

There will be services at the various churches Sunday, but if you are not feeling well, stay at home for your own protection, as well as that of others.

The schools will open Monday. Watch your children carefully, and if they are not well, keep them at home.

Theaters, lodges and pool rooms will also begin operations Monday and we hope within the next few weeks to see Pullman the same busy, happy little city she was before this awful epidemic struck us.

J. L. GILLELAND,
City Health Officer
FUNERAL HELD FOR MRS. J. W. NELSON

Influenza And The Mask.

The above is a chart showing when the influenza started in Logan and how it had spread since, with reference to the total number of cases in the city each day, the total number of places in quarantined and the total number of deaths which have occurred. From this chart the condition for any day can readily be determined. For example take the 21st day of November. The chart shows that there was a total of 123 cases, and a total of 97 houses in quarantined in the entire city on that day. The death curve shows that there had been five deaths from the disease up to that date, but that on the 21st two more deaths occurred, making a total of seven.

Until the 16th day of November there had been only one or two cases of the disease developed in the business district of the city, but upon that date there was ten or twelve cases developed in the business houses on Main Street. It therefore became evident to the board of health that further precautions would have to be taken if an increased spread of the disease was to be checked. An ordinance was therefore passed on the 20th, making the universal wearing of face masks compulsory.
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Pandemic and Civic Virtue: The American Red Cross and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918
March 19, 2020 by Danna Bell

Historical primary sources provide examples of civic virtue— that is, of citizens dedicating themselves to the common welfare, even at the cost of their own interests. By examining such sources, students can reflect on how civic virtue was practiced in the past, and how the concept might apply today.

Posted in: Industrial United States, World Wars and the Great Depression (1914-1945)
Pandemic and Civic Virtue: The American Red Cross and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918

March 19, 2020 by Danna Bell

This post is by Michael Apfeldorf of the Library of Congress.

In 1918, the United States faced one of the worst public health challenges in its history. An influenza pandemic – also known as the Spanish flu – infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide, killing 20-50 million people, including hundreds of thousands of Americans.

In response to that crisis, the American Red Cross mobilized countless Americans to assist their fellow citizens. Historical primary sources provide examples of civic virtue— that is, of citizens dedicating themselves to the common welfare, even at the cost of their own interests. By examining such sources, students can reflect on how civic virtue was practiced in the past, and how the concept might apply today.

Introduce students to the Spanish flu by asking them to examine this image of masked men near a Seattle street car.
Next, divide students into groups and invite them to analyze an additional source, responding to the focus question: "How did U.S. citizens serve their communities during the Spanish flu?" Some possible sources include:

- "Red Cross Opens Influenza Hospital" – an article asking citizens to donate food to the hospital.
- "The Public Health Nurse: She answers humanity's call" – a poster inviting citizens to donate money to support community care.
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World War I Teacher’s Guide (PDF, 1.51 MB)

To help your students analyze these primary sources, get a graphic organizer and guides:

Analysis Tool and Guides

Student Discovery Set — free ebook on iBooks

Primary Sources

Click the thumbnail for the original item, the caption for information on the item, or download a PDF.

- Geography and Chronology of the World War
- Victim of Assassin’s Bullets
- Lusitania Is Sunk
- The Anti-War League of the District of Columbia Will Hold a Big
- I Want You for U.S. Army

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PHOTO, PRINT, DRAWING

The weaker sex? / Chamberlain.

THE WEAKER SEX?
"Woman's place is in the home." — Anti-Suffragist
Coming Soon: Major Exhibition on Rosa Parks

"Rosa Parks: In Her Own Words," the first exhibition of Parks' personal collection, opens Dec. 5.