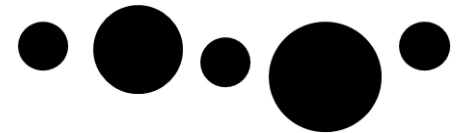




Online Office Hours

We'll get started at 2 ET



Library of Congress Online Office Hours

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- Your first name**
- Where you're joining us from**
- Why you're here**

THE U.S., WORLD WAR I, AND SPREADING INFLUENZA IN 1918

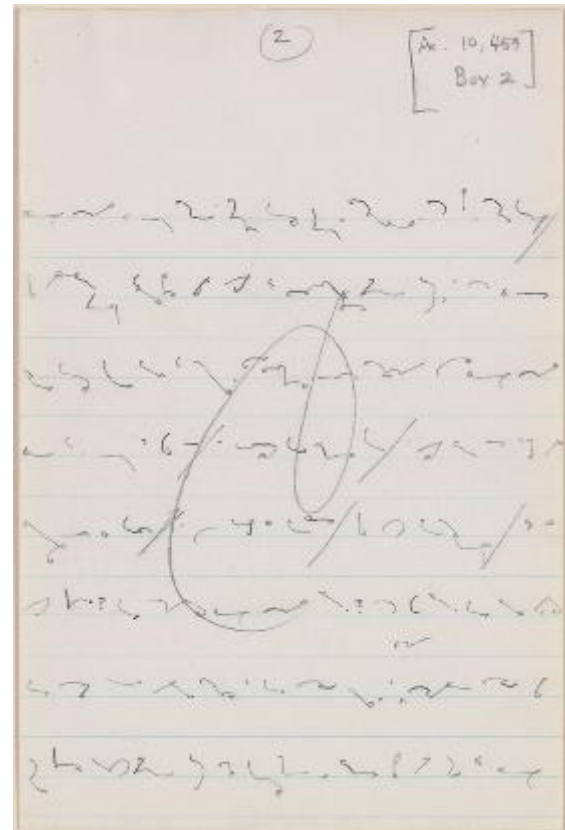
Ryan Reft, historian of modern America in the
Manuscript Division at the Library of
Congress

Using LoC collections to research influenza pandemic 1918-1919

Three main takeaways

- Demonstrate the way World War I facilitated the spread of the virus through mobilization
- How the pandemic was fought domestically and its effects
- Influenza's possible impact on world events via Woodrow Wilson and the Treaty of Versailles

Woodrow Wilson, draft Fourteen Points, 1918



U.S. in January 1918

Mobilization

- Creating a military
 - Selective Service Act passed in May 1917
 - First truly conscripted military in U.S. history
 - Creates military of four million; two million go overseas
 - Military camps set up across nation
- Home front oriented to wartime production of goods
- January 1918 Woodrow Wilson outlines his 14 points

Military Map of the [USA], 1917



Straight Outta Kansas

Camp Funston

- First reported case of influenza in Haskell County, KS, February 1918
- Camp Funston (Fort Riley), second largest cantonment
 - 56,000 troops
 - Virus erupts there in March
 - Cold conditions, overcrowded tents, poorly heated, inadequate clothing

[Camp Funston, Fort Riley, 1918](#)



The first of three waves

- **First wave**, February – May, 1918
 - “high morbidity, but low mortality” – Anthony Fauci, 2018
 - Americans carry over to Europe where it changes
 - **Second wave**, August – December
 - Most lethal, high mortality esp. between ages 20-40
 - Probably brought back by U.S. soldiers from Europe where picked up new strain
 - **Third wave**, January –April, 1919
 - Still quite lethal, but less than second wave and much more than first
- Even if there was war ... the war was removed from us you know ... on the other side ... This malignancy, it was right at our very doors.” – Susanna Turner of Philadelphia, Fall 1918 (second wave)
 - From *The Great Influenza* by John M. Barry

United States Public Health Service (USPHS)

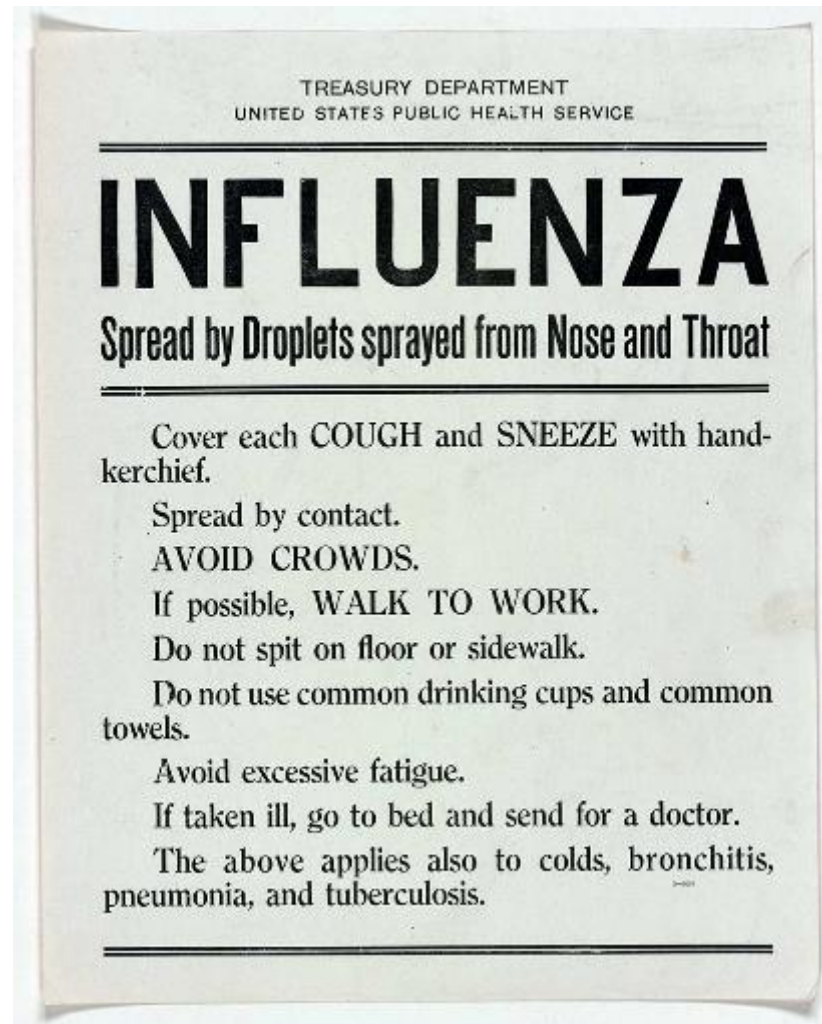
1918

- USPHS headed by civilian surgeon general, Rupert Blue
- Failed to act quickly during outbreak
- Impeded efforts in some moments
- Failed to prepare agency for epidemic

Rupert Blue, civilian surgeon general, and head of the USPHS



Treasury Dept. [USPHS Influenza] Broadside, 1918



Not in Kansas City anymore

Dorothy Kitchen O'Neill

- O'Neill volunteers for Red Cross
- From Kansas City, Mo.
 - Based on reference in a letter regarding her father pulling strings from a Senator James A. Reed
- Well off middle/upper middle class woman
- Indicative of female volunteerism during war

Dorothy Kitchen O'Neill in France, 1918

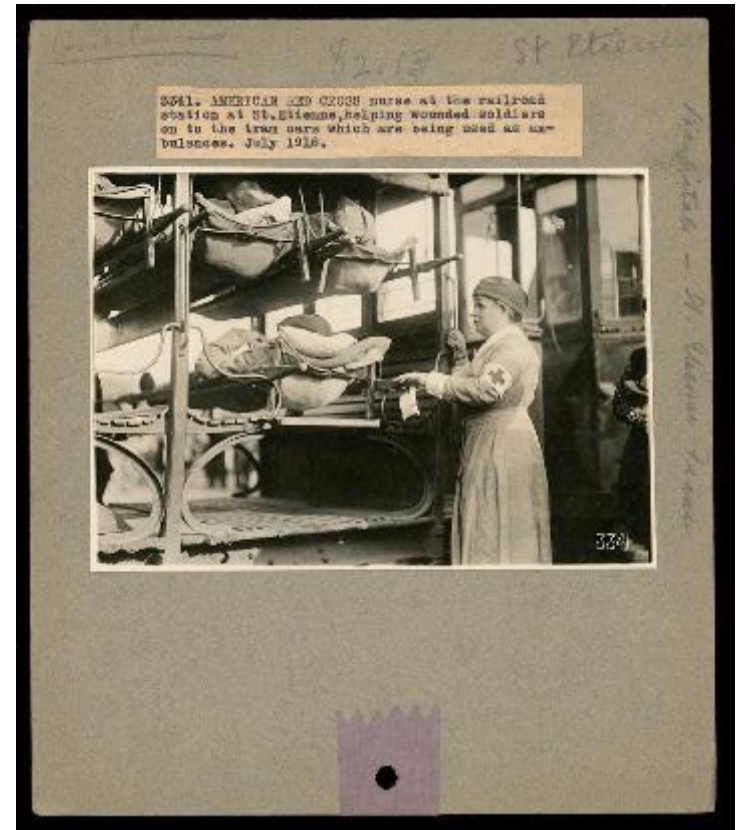


American Red Cross

1918

- 14 regional divisions, 3,684 chapters, 12,700 staff, and 20 million members
- Wartime fundraising raised \$400 million (5 bill in 2020 \$'s)
- U.S. Govt depends on heavily overseas and at home
- Works with local “clubwomen” during pandemic
 - Progressive era female volunteerism

[Lewis Hine, American Red Cross Nurse, St. Etienne France, July 1918](#)



Progressive Era Clubwomen

African American and white communities

- Segregated world but both communities have prominent middle and upper middle class women working on reform
 - General Federation of Women's Club (GFWC)
- Issues: Health, sanitation, anti-vice.
 - Often though not always suffrage
- For African American clubwomen add racial equality
 - National Assoc. of Colored Women
- Play a key role in mobilization and fighting the pandemic

[Woman's Land Army poster, 1918](#)



Public Health Nurses

1918

- War had taken between one fourth and one third of physicians and nurses from cities
- Public Health Nurses
 - 6,000
 - **Home Defense Nurses**
 - Disqualified from war service due to physical disability, marriage or other causes

Red Cross Public Health Nurse,
ca. 1918-1919



African American Nurses on the Homefront, 1918-1919

Blue Circle Nurses

- Established by Ada Thoms in 1917
 - She advocated for admittance of black nurses to ARC/military
- Provided health care to segregated communities
 - Access to hospitals and health care heavily limited by segregation
 - Blue Circle Largely in the South
 - Great Migration had only just begun

ARC and Race

- African American nurses denied entry into Red Cross and military until later in war
- Sent to Camp Sherman (Ohio) and Camp Grant (IL) amid influenza outbreak

African Americans During Influenza

Home and away

- Domestically and overseas, segregated
 - 400,000 serve in Army
- Home front reduced access to health care and facilities
- From 1890s-1900s establishment of network of African American hospitals
- Evidence suggests suffered lowered death rates during pandemic than white counterparts despite health care inequalities and segregation

Provident Hospital, II Established 1891



O'Neill and the New York Red Cross

O'Neill from Kansas City to Chicago to NYC

- Arrives in NYC early
September
- Registers with Red Cross
- Spends next few weeks
going out; see's Al Jolson
perform; drinks with family
friends
- Departs on train to Quebec
to ship to go to Europe
- Ship sets off around Sept 27

O'Neill, September 1918

- “The Fall styles of New York
pale in comparison with
uniforms. Every few minutes on
Fifth Avenue a woman goes by
in a different uniform, and
Father looks astonished and
says, ‘Now what’s that?’ Army
nurses in dark blue, Red Cross
Nurses in red lined capes,
Women’s Telephone Unit,
Motor Corps, Y.M.C.A., and the
Red Cross Overseas crowd.
Very startling. Did I tell you that
we have horizon blue on our
collars?”

"A Voyage like hell..." "O'Neill, Oct 10, 1918

Copy to O'Neill

2


Combination of one of the worst
storms in 100 years. One of the
the ships in the line - we
the crew was saved - we
have a wonderful captain - and
this morning when he went
through the breakfast room
everyone gave him an ovation
and cheered -

Only girls came down with the
influenza and it had not been
for the little unit of 10 R.C.
times - goodness knows what
might have happened - all this
each infant I see from two or
three girls died and these are
still there in danger who are to
be turned off here - in a hospital
ship - I was down for a week and
have only been up for two days so
I feel really the same and
I don't just give more so
feel fine - just got up yesterday.
On days just
Virginia was there some except
for 3 days sea sickness (all
who did it put the S. D. were
sea sick - and she and mine

Copied 1962

H 9

October 10th
1918

 S.S. "VESTRIS"

Account family -
Do you know what a beautiful
thing land is? We saw it for the
first time yesterday and I can't
describe the feelings I had - about six
o'clock we heard the call and
came out on the lower deck and
there far off in the fog we saw
after hearing the eyes, a little
trace of light from an English
light house! and we just stood and
adored it! How I'm up on deck
and we are in the
anchored - there are a
within little boats fishing boats
and camouflaged gun boats and real
wills! Someone just called out that
they saw the outline of a real
train, and we looked and looked
at it.

It has been a voyage like
Hell! Truly the combination of
Spanish Influenza breaking out in

“I was down for a week ...”

Influenza outbreak early October

- “It has been a strange voyage. Picture the combination of Spanish Influenza breaking out in combination with one of the worst storms in two years ... one of the ships in our convoy sunk, but the crew was saved.”
- O’Neill fell ill for a week; 40 “girls” became sick and four girls died
- O’Neill credits ARC nurses on board with saving everyone’s life
- Troopship suffers 48 deaths in two hours

“The Greatest Mother in the World,
” 1917



O'Neill, October 13, 1918 from Le Havre

- “We were to have had troops, but on account of the quarantine, we didn’t. We’ve just heard that on a troop ship in our convoy there were forty eight deaths from the epidemic within two hours. I feel dreadfully about Ruth McGreagor, one of our girls who died of flu. I had seen a lot of her in New York those last few days. She came from Indianapolis. She and the first are buried at sea. We had gotten to England when Miss Shaw, the third one, died so her body was taken off there. She knew the Dickens and Mrs. Loore very well. Her father was Leslie Shaw. She had a fiancé in France.”

J.C. Crosby. Officers and Crew, USS
Mount Vernon, 10/30/18



Liberty Loan Parade/Bond Drive

Sept/Oct 1918

- Fundraising for for war through Liberty Loan Drives
- Much of funding for WWI raised through borrowing
- Liberty Loan emphasized purchase of war bonds
 - Raised about \$20 billion during war
- Parades held in major cities in Sept/Oct
 - Spread virus

Liberty Loan drive button from fourth drive, 1918.



Spreading the Disease, 1918

“Buy a Liberty Bond ...” 1917



Wilson at Liberty Loan Parade, D.C., 1918



“Wilson arrives in [NY] to lead fourth Liberty Loan Parade,” [September 27], 1918

- <https://www.loc.gov/item/mp76000040/>
- Philadelphia holds its parade on Sept 28 followed by devastating wave of influenza
- Despite holding parade Sept. 26, NYC has lowest numbers on East Coast for death rates; credited to history of public health infrastructure
 - Surveillance, isolation, quarantine
- San Francisco holds parade October 6, one of worst death rates on West Coast and of pandemic

General points about the pandemic stateside

Effects on cities vary

- East Coast/South
 - Philly, Boston, Pittsburgh, Richmond, New Orleans, and DC suffer worst outbreaks
- West Coast suffers but not as bad
 - San Francisco the exception
- Midwest hit the least
 - St. Louis and Chicago very effective responses
 - Bad though: Cook County Hospital: nearly 40% mortality rate for all influenza cases
- Factors:
 - Proximity to military camps
 - Proximity to a port
 - Local leadership
 - Machine politics in NYC and Philly make it much worse

St. Louis [ARC] Motor Corps, Oct. 1918



At same time in Paris ...

Dorothy Kitchen O'Neill

“Going back we did not go in the wards, as there is so much Flu, but we’d stop and look in the windows and wave to the boys. The smile that you got when they saw you was the most heartwarming thing. But the one who did not lift their heads from their pillows were heartbreaking.”

O'Neill, Oct. 20, 1918

- Virus sometimes long term affects
 - Including neurological
- O'Neill sees doctors for several weeks after
- “There is an average of 400 deaths from flu in Paris each week. I am to go to him for another treatment tomorrow.”
 - O'Neill, October 20, 1918

What immigrant communities?

Race/Ethnicity

- Nativism very high during war but very little scapegoating of immigrants for virus
 - Unusual, since often first to be blamed
- Depended on ethnic newspapers for info and ethnic hospitals for treatment
 - Boston's Beth Israel
 - Baltimore's Hebrew Hospital

"Make the Fourth of July Americanization Day," 1915-19



The virus even affected future global relations argue some historians ...

Woodrow Wilson

- In Paris to negotiate Treaty of Versailles
- Falls ill April 3, 1919 (3rd wave of virus)
- Takes day to recover; caves on points days before had refused to
- Never fully recovers and John Barry argues contributed to the heart attack he suffered four months later
- Treaty never ratified by US and blamed for laying groundwork for WWII

Helen Kirtland, "Versailles," Jan 1919



White House Doctor on WW

- “I have never seen the President look so worn and tired ... He could not remember without an effort what the council had done in the forenoon.”
 - Dr .Cary Grayson

Clemenceau, Wilson, Lloyd George after signing treaty

