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“A Serious Matter and Something of a Mystery”: 1918 Influenza in the *New York Times*
and the London *Times*

by
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“A SERIOUS MATTER AND SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY”: 1918 INFLUENZA
IN THE *NEW YORK TIMES* AND THE *LONDON TIMES*

By Jessica M. Donnelly

THESIS ABSTRACT
Idaho State University (2017)

In 1918, influenza deaths overtook casualty numbers of the Great War, causing up to 100 million deaths worldwide. The *New York Times* told readers not to worry, the outbreak was “well in hand.” That optimistic reporting proved laughably incorrect. From September to December, articles in the *New York Times* mentioning influenza numbered 352, with 58 separate advertisements. Across the Atlantic Ocean, Great Britain also faced influenza. As Britain and even the prime minister took sick, flu earned daily news briefs in the *London Times*. A total 404 articles and 29 ads mentioned influenza in the same period. Influenza assaulted the readers of these papers daily, and by extension, their societies. Flu created fear and anger in the press. Utilizing online digital archives for both papers, this thesis will provide transnational insight into relationships between journalism and society during unprecedented disease within a world already overburdened by industrial war.

INTRODUCTION

“I Feel a Little Bit Queer, That’s All.” A Deadly Pandemic

In September 1918, Sarah A. Cone took her marriage vows. Her wedding was less traditional than most, as it was in a hospital. She obtained her marriage license while rushing from Waltham, Massachusetts to Yonkers, New York, where her hospitalized fiancé George S. Abbott suffered from “Spanish influenza”.¹ George, weakened and ill, could not return Sarah’s vows. Doctors told Sarah “the chances for Mr. Abbott’s recovery were slight.”² There would be no honeymoon for George and Sarah. Preserved in the *New York Times*, their story was one among many who fell ill to influenza that year in a global pandemic deadlier than even the medieval bubonic plague.

In this thesis, I study the influenza pandemic’s social history as it unfolded in newsprint, both in the United States and Great Britain. Newspaper articles, advertisements, and obituaries, located within the *New York Times* and the *London Times*, provided the basis for my analysis of influenza’s infiltration into the press. I argue that the influenza pandemic created an anxious and stressed environment within both papers, through repetitive, constant coverage. The newspapers echoed influenza’s prevalence in greater society during the last four months of 1918. Flu made appearances in articles discussing politics, economics, arts and entertainment, sports, and even advertisements, becoming a separate entity from war news, even as the disease spread through New York and London populations. Influenza invaded the press and the fear

¹ “F.D. Roosevelt Spanish Grip Victim,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1918, 14.

² Ibid.

associated with the disease moved beyond national borders, and became a global, communal experience.

The influenza pandemic left the world with more death and destruction than the entire Great War. Traditionally, the accepted global mortality rests between 20 and 50 million people.³ However, some suggest the number to be as high as 100 million.⁴ Those who died did so quickly, often within a week of contracting influenza, and often from a secondary infection of pneumonia that left the skin blue from suffocation.⁵ Where disease traditionally struck the very young or very old, the 1918 influenza pandemic was not as discriminate; it was twenty times more deadly to those aged 15-34.⁶ As such, the generation already decimated by war casualties was further ravaged by influenza.

Called the “Spanish influenza,” the flu that year would have a severe impact on the war effort. Flu struck soldiers “earlier and more severely than the civilian population: and, to a considerable extent the armed services were the foci from which the civilian population received the disease.”⁷ World War I significantly contributed to the pandemic’s reach into social and political spheres, particularly within the United States. The outbreak spread from camp to camp and soldier to soldier, creating weak, diseased fighting forces that died more often from illness than combat. From there, it spread to cities and civilian populations.

³ Alfred W. Crosby, *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.

⁴ Niall P. A. S. and Juergen Mueller, “Updating the Accounts: Global Mortality of the 1918–1920 “Spanish” Influenza Pandemic,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 76, (2002): 114.

⁵ Ann Reid, Thomas G. Fanning, Johan V. Hultin and Jeffery K. Taubenberger, “Origin and Evolution of the 1918 ‘Spanish’ Influenza Virus Hemagglutinin Gene,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 96, no. 4 (1999): 1651.

⁶ Jefferey K. Taubenberger and David M. Morens, “1918: The Mother of All Pandemics,” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12, no. 1 (2006): 19.

⁷ Crosby, 56.

Understanding influenza requires a discussion on the nature of infectious disease. Viruses and bacteria are microbial agents. Microbes occupy every space of our bodies in a natural synergy without which humans could not eat or even breathe. Occasionally, we encounter or become infected with microbes that cause harm. The flu is one such virus. Viruses straddle the line between living and non-living. Lacking the ability to self-replicate or reproduce, a key component to “life,” viruses pursue hosts to invade. The infected host’s cells then reproduce new viruses, and the body expels those through transmission in the air, moisture, and sometimes touch. Without a host, a virus cannot survive, and thus viral diseases present in waves of illness. As the pool of hosts die out or become immune, viruses evolve to return, sometimes more infectious than before, and a new wave begins.

Influenza is particularly adept at this viral cycle, evolving quickly to outwit human cells, so that our own immune systems fail to prevent future infections. There are up to 170 subtypes of influenza, divided across four categories.⁸ This complex disease is often relatively benign, but in 1918, it adapted into an unparalleled strain, more severe and deadly than ever before.

Influenza came in waves across the world throughout 1918 and early 1919. Global populations understood disease better than in previous centuries, thanks to germ theory developing in the second half of the 19th century. The earliest influenza wave hit during the spring, but it stayed limited mostly to soldiers and died out within a matter of weeks; the news seemed hardly noteworthy.⁹ The spring waves gave the disease a name,

⁸ “Types of Influenza Virus,” *Center for Disease Control*, accessed April 9, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/types.htm>

⁹ Crosby, 19-22.

with news reports calling it “Spanish influenza” across the world. Despite the earliest cases occurring the United States, the outbreak became “Spanish” as Spain was a country outside the war, with uncensored news and therefore allowed to report as people fell ill that spring.¹⁰ Britain’s first wave was particularly long, though not as deadly as the second. It tapered off at the end of August and left war effort production timelines in havoc.¹¹ However, influenza returned, more deadly and virulent than its spring successor, in September. This period, the second and most deadly of all three waves, broke in September and by its end in December, nowhere in the world remained unaffected.¹² The final wave lasted from January to March of 1919.

“Spanish Flu or Whatever It Is”: The Missing History of Influenza

Despite its global impact, the 1918 influenza was a pandemic forgotten in the larger historical narrative of the Great War. Historians focused on the effects of industrial war while U.S. based public health studies and epidemiologists kept the memory of the flu alive. The only work outside the public health field dedicated to the flu compiled anecdotal evidence from 1700 survivors in a narrative form that brought attention to the personal experience of the pandemic, documenting emotional insights into the unexplored pandemic.¹³

It was not until 1976 that influenza’s astounding numbers and other public health data began to contribute to historical narrative. Alfred W. Crosby’s *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (originally titled *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*) became an

¹⁰ Crosby, 26.

¹¹ “Fewer Ships in August,” *London Times*, September 5, 1918, 6; “Reduced Coal Output,” *London Times*, September 7, 1918, 3.

¹² Taubenberger and Morens, 19.

¹³ Richard Collier, *The Plague of the Spanish Lady* (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

instant authority on the flu's impact. His work began when he noticed a 12 year drop in life expectancies between almanacs, and asked, "What the hell happened?"¹⁴ Crosby's work elevated him as an expert in the field for historical research into epidemic disease and the social implications of pandemics and his work found in the bibliography of virtually all works on the topic since.

Crosby's work acted as a jumping off point for others to understand what happened in 1918. The unique biological factors of the disease itself and medicine's failure to overcome the pandemic became an entire subset of scholarship. The most popular example, John M. Barry's well-known work, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*, focused on "the first great collision between nature and modern science."¹⁵ Barry also discussed, in detail, the nature and process of mutation, of which influenza seems particularly adept.¹⁶ Gina Kolata expanded Barry's work, crossing back towards the realm of hard science in *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus*. However, where Barry looked at the evolutionary features that made the pandemic so deadly, Kolata highlighted many of those fighting flu at the molecular level such as microbiologists Jeffery Taubenberger, Ann Reid, and Johan Hutlin.¹⁷

Though much of the work on influenza remained American centric, due to the ties to the U.S. Public Health Service, one particularly notable book focused on the British experience. *Britain and the 1918-1919 Pandemic: A Dark Epilogue*, written by Niall

¹⁴ Gina Kolata, *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 8.

¹⁵ John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009) 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁷ Kolata, 201-285.

Johnson, would become the essential reference for the impact and experiences of influenza in Great Britain, much like Crosby's work for the United States. Another book, *Living with Enza: The Forgotten Story of Britain and the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918* by Mark Honigsbaum, returned to the qualitative accounts compiled by Richard Collier, which up to that point had remained largely unanalyzed.¹⁸

While many of these works used the wealth of newspaper coverage available to augment influenza's story, their foci lay elsewhere. Pieces of influenza's daily print came to the forefront, as Francesco Aimone's examination of New York City's public health response using *The New York Times* showed.¹⁹ The question remained in how mass communication portrayed influenza. Flu cases rose exponentially, particularly during the second wave, the press coverage of influenza was substantial. What stories did the newspapers hold?

"The Malady is Not Dangerous": Influenza in the Media

Influenza arrived in New York in mid-August of 1918. A Norwegian liner arrived in New York bringing fourteen ill people into the country.²⁰ *The New York Times* reported the arrival and assured readers that catching influenza was more common for people from Europe, who were malnourished and forced to eat "bad bread" during the war.²¹ However, that optimistic reporting proved to be laughably incorrect. America kept the war away from its shores, but had no way preventing the flu from dispersing through

¹⁸ Mark Honigsbaum, *Living with Enza: The Forgotten Story of Britain and the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), xv.

¹⁹ Francesco, Aimone, "The 1918 Influenza Epidemic in New York City: A Review of the Public Health Response," *Public Health Reports* 125, no. 3 (2010): 71-79.

²⁰ "Spanish Influenza Here, Ship Men Say," *New York Times*, August 14, 1918, 1, 18.

²¹ "F.D. Roosevelt Spanish Grip Victim," *New York Times*, September 20, 1918, 14.

the nation. The *New York Times* was far from done with reporting case numbers of those stricken with influenza.

Between September and December 1918, The *New York Times* printed multiple influenza articles daily.²² The epidemic became a daily feature of the American landscape, sweeping through New York and the rest of the United States in three months. Twenty-five million Americans became ill with influenza and 675,000 died, including many soldiers living in military camps or returning from overseas.²³ Much of the paper's reporting focused on public health interventions and the flu's devastation of war efforts, but eventually encompassed all areas of news including sports, arts, and economics.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, Great Britain also faced influenza as the pandemic overtook the world. Influenza arrived via repatriated soldiers and railways, as they repatriated at war's end. Britain would lose 228,000 to flu.²⁴ The *London Times* reported influenza news, though September's news of flu was outside of Great Britain. Influenza references appeared slowly throughout September, visible in single sentence news briefs among local news or reports of the war.²⁵ Coverage of Britain's epidemic increased substantially, becoming prominent enough to earn daily news briefs by mid-October.²⁶

This thesis will analyze the stories unveiled by the *New York Times* and the *London Times* coverage of the 1918 influenza pandemic in a transnational exploration of the relationship between journalism and society at a time of unprecedented disease within a world already overburdened by industrial war. These specific newspapers circulated

²² *New York Times*, September – December 1918.

²³ Crosby, 206.

²⁴ Niall Johnson, *Britain and the 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic: A Dark Epilogue* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 76.

²⁵ *London Times*, September – December 1918.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

widely, indicating a popular relationship with its audience. The paper enjoyed readership particularly with middle and upper social classes. The *New York Times* circulated more than 200,000 copies, while the *London Times* circulated approximately 150,000 copies daily.²⁷ Both established papers of long standing news sources and printed daily news, though the *London Times* did not print on Sundays. With a large circulation and extensive coverage beyond their own cities, these newspapers echo the political, social, and medical attitudes toward the influenza.

From September to December 1918, articles in the *New York Times* mentioning influenza, flu, or grippe numbered 352, not including advertisements. These articles ranged from front page news to casual mentions when discussing plays, and most often, listed case numbers for military camps, New York boroughs, and the United States at large. Much of the news printed quoted the Public Health Service and New York Health Commissioner. The *New York Times* acted as the middle man between health officials and the larger community of its audience.

The *London Times* reported less news regarding influenza initially, but reported on the outbreak increasingly as each month passed from September to December of the same year. Not including advertisements, 404 articles mentioned influenza, flu, grip, or grippe. These included local and world news, business announcements, death notices, and much like the *New York Times*, war-focused articles that casually commented on the presence of the flu as something impacting the war. Early in the second wave, flu was

²⁷ For *New York Times* see Elmer Davis, *History of the New York Times 1851-1921* (New York: New York Times, 1921), 310. For *London Times* see Alfred Powell Wadsworth, *Newspaper Circulation, 1800-1954* (Manchester: Norbury, Lockwood & Co, 1955), 41.

secondary to the status of imperial affairs, city news, or economic production, until, like New York, avoiding the epidemic was no longer an option.

Whether in New York or London, society faced a barrage of influenza-focused media, ensuring that the public was hyper-aware of the outbreak. In September 1918, the Department of Health in New York City released over 10,000 messages, many reiterated and printed in the *New York Times*.²⁸ John M. Barry stated, “There was terror afoot in 1918, real terror. The media and public officials helped create that terror — not by exaggerating the disease, but by minimizing it, by trying to reassure.”²⁹ This thesis intends to understand the relationship between the media and the public in the larger narrative of the pandemic. What was the nature of the news coverage for the second wave of the 1918 influenza epidemics in New York and London? How did news coverage change when presented in different countries? Is this narrative intertwined with the narrative of the war, or does it represent a distinct cultural transition? How did the coverage of the influenza pandemic contribute or detract from the national and highly patriotic public sphere present in newspapers of the time? How did print media guide or sensationalize the people who were falling ill and dying?

The first chapter will analyze the newspapers’ coverage from September through December quantitatively to provide insight into reporting trends. The story of the second wave of deadly influenza during late 1918 in both the *New York Times* and the *London Times* numbered a total of more than 700 articles. It spread from mentions of illness occurring to a full-blown panic of daily, multiple articles and warnings. While much of the news tried to reassure, as Barry suggested, it was incapable of doing so as it listed

²⁸ Aimone, 76.

²⁹ Barry, 460.

numbers of sick and the dead. In the early days of the outbreak, the *New York Times* placed the outbreak outside of civilian experience by often stating that it was an illness for military or immigrants and that there was no chance flu would come to New York. Once it was obvious this was not the case, reporting took a stark turn and lost its optimism. The *London Times* also initially reported numerous outbreaks across Europe and outside Britain, but seemed to censor information until there was no other option.

The second chapter will focus on the intermingle of narratives between influenza and the War. It was impossible to separate the two initially, though the epidemic would become its own news entity. Articles dedicated to flu appeared and it was no longer secondary to war news. In some cases, flu took prominence in the *New York Times* reporting. The influenza epidemic dismantled the barrier of separation between the United States and the war experience. While Britain had dealt with astronomical death rates and horrible outcomes for years, influenza brought that experience to the United States. However, once Armistice occurred, the *London Times* would explode with influenza coverage, and like the *New York Times*, dedicate pages of press specifically to the outbreak.

The final chapter's focus lies in the specific relationship between newspaper and public. Both papers sensationalized the pandemic, simply by the repetitive and constant coverage. Yet, the experience was so uncontrollable and deadly, that sensationalism was inescapable. Reporting of influenza spread into all areas of the newspapers, and by extension, all areas of public life. Symptom lists and warnings invoked fear of every cough and sneeze. Advertisements for medicines and other products utilized the flu to promote sales. Arts and entertainment, sports, and economics reports all suffered from

influenza encroachment. Influenza broke through both New York and London, leaving no one free from its impact. The newspapers both informed and sensationalized, contributing to panic even as it tried to reassure the public.

CHAPTER 1: INFECTING THE PRESS

Influenza invaded the *New York Times* and the *London Times* during the second wave of the pandemic in 1918. After its limited first wave, through the spring, many assumed the worst was over. However, John M. Barry suggested, the virus “had only gone underground, like a forest fire left burning in the roots, swarming and mutating, adapting, honing itself, watching and waiting, waiting to burst into flame.”¹ That flame ignited in September and burned the world, causing an estimated one-third of the population to become ill.² The newspapers, even in the face of constant pressure to focus attention on the war, dedicated precious inches and pages of printed space to discuss the pandemic, announce the dead, and even market products to prevent disease.

The sheer number of articles in both the *New York Times* and the *London Times* told the public a story of sickness, death, and desperation by those attempting to control it. It was censored news, to be sure, but newspapers provided windows into notable events and daily matters and provided the public with a connection to current events. However, despite the large numbers of articles dedicated to the flu, it was often “overshadowed by war” and downplayed to avoid panic.³ Influenza did not contribute positively to the war effort and attempted to keep the public patriotically invigorated. Articles mentioning influenza exploded in the *New York Times* in mid-September and the *London Times* followed a month later.

While earlier mentions occurred, this wave of illness echoed in the newspapers reporting them more loudly. *The New York Times* often acted as a mouthpiece for the

¹ Barry, 175.

² Taubenberger and Morens, 15.

³ Jack Fincher, “America’s Deadly Rendezvous with the ‘Spanish Lady’,” *Smithsonian* 89, no. 10 (1989), 137-138.

Public Health Service and focused its reporting domestically, rather than with a global focus. Influenza articles were long, detailed, and often found in multiples on the same page. The London *Times* limited much of its early flu reporting to short lines of text found in larger “Imperial and Foreign News” sections.⁴ Though initially limited, influenza articles dedicated to the epidemic appeared and proliferated in mid-October. Attempts to reassure the public instead resembled to be fatalistic warnings. Obituaries carried the same message. Though many obituaries avoided the word “influenza,” deaths occurred often enough that it was all too clear that anyone could fall sick and die. Advertisers capitalized on this morbidity, using influenza and the threat of disease to sell products. The amount of influenza press coverage in the daily life of those reading the *New York Times* and the London *Times* ensured they could not escape the reality of the disease and its terrifying impact. The daily press notifications created an environment of fear, and dislocated people from one another as they began to worry about catching the infection from one another.

“Drastic Steps Taken to Fight Influenza”: Articles

Casual reports on the appearance of flu became multiple, daily warnings and updates in the *New York Times* for the state of New York and the U.S. as the epidemic took hold from mid-September until mid-November. Several reports in late August and early September explained the presence of the deadly flu appearing in army camps and on ships containing immigrants.⁵ These reports in the *New York Times* were all cases that affected others – those outside New York, outside civilian experience, and outside of a

⁴ Johnson, 165.

⁵ *New York Times*, August 14, 1918 - September 11, 1918.

reader's worry. On September 13, Royal S. Copeland, President of the New York Board of Health, reassured the press, "Persons in this city are in no danger of an epidemic."⁶ However, that reassurance contradicted influenza's prominence in the media and its impact on public health concerns.

The first reported cases of influenza entered New York's civilian population occurred on September 19 and continued to refute Copeland's repetitive assurance that there was no danger.⁷ The paper contained news of influenza daily from mid-September until mid-November. Though flu appeared in the *New York Times* before the second wave, only 14 articles during the four weeks between August 14 and September 11 mentioned the illness, and all were small articles or in the later pages of the paper.⁸ However, even these 14 articles indicated an increasing frequency as influenza articles in 1917 numbered 11 total.⁹ The incidents continued to accumulate, bringing daily exposure for the outbreak. Sixty-three articles featured in September, but October flooded pages with 250 influenza mentions.¹⁰ November and December's articles dropped off quickly, with only 16 articles and 22 articles, respectively.¹¹

Despite the constant news coverage found within the papers, influenza lost prominence to the war and its efforts. From September 1 – December 31, 1918, the *New York Times* only featured influenza dedicated articles on the front page three times.¹² Any other front page mentions of influenza were integrated within war-related news, most

⁶ "City is Not in Danger from Spanish Grip," *New York Times*, September 13, 1918, 7.

⁷ "Think Influenza Came in U-Boat," *New York Times*, September 19, 1918, 11.

⁸ *New York Times*, August 14, 1918 – September 11, 1918.

⁹ *New York Times*, January 1-December 23, 1917.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, September 1 – October 31, 1918.

¹¹ *New York Times*, November 1 – December 31, 1918.

¹² See page one articles "Influenza Stops Flow to Draft Camps," *New York Times*, September 27, 1918, 1; "Drastic Steps to Fight Influenza Taken Here," *New York Times*, October 5, 1918, 1; "Revise Time Table in Influenza Fight," *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 1.

often as it related to hampering the efforts of the Liberty Bond. In the month of October, there were ten Liberty Bond articles throughout the paper that discussed bond sale drives “against enormous odds caused chiefly by influenza.”¹³ After October, no front-page articles discussed or mentioned influenza. Though it lost front page status to the war, influenza appeared often. For instance, mentions of influenza occurred in 22 separate articles on October 13, 1918, alone.¹⁴

The increasing frequency of the articles printed in the *New York Times* echoed the wave of influenza sweeping through the world. The epidemic came on suddenly, consumed and infected, then died down just as quickly due to a lack of available hosts. It was much different from the earlier wave that year. The initial appearance of abnormal influenza remained mostly within Europe and U.S. Army camps.¹⁵ Few reports made the news unless they related to the war. That first wave of flu caused mild illness, and unconcerned medical officers assumed it died out in August.¹⁶ The flu was hardly a matter for the press; it was for the military to worry over. Those attitudes proved to be comically mistaken.

News in the London *Times* showed a slightly different wave of influenza reporting than the *New York Times*. Influenza featured more prominently in the earlier portion of the

¹³ “Bond Sales Reach 4 Billion Mark with 2 Days Left,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1918, 1. For other examples see, “Roll Up a Total of \$411,142,050 thus far for Loan,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1918, 1; “McAdoo Exhorts Nation to Speed Work for Loan,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1918, 1; “Bond Sales Total Now \$855,133,900,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1918, 1; “Billion Mark Passed by Loan, but Pace is Slow,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 1; “Appeal to Nation to Tax Resources in Buying Bonds,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1918, 1; “Redouble Efforts as Wilson urges Pushing the Loan,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1918, 1; “Nation Reaches 3 Billion Mark In Loan Drive,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1918, 1; “More than Billion Still is Needed To Fill the Loan,” *New York Times*, October 19, 1918, 1; “20,000,000 Lend Funds to Fill America's Loan,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1918, 1.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, October 1918.

¹⁵ Crosby, 27-30.

¹⁶ Carol R. Byerly, *Fever of War: The Influenza Epidemic in the U.S. Army During World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 71.

year's news when compared to the *New York Times*, as Britain's fighting forces fell sick in the first wave of flu.¹⁷ There were references to flu in the paper through the summer.¹⁸ The *London Times* influenza articles numbered 27 in September.¹⁹ Most articles reported on influenza in France, Switzerland, and Australia. Only nine articles mentioned cases of influenza within Britain and four of those were obituaries.²⁰ Others, like the news of November 25, listed prominent members of society who had fallen sick such as the Viscountess Rhondda who "was seriously ill with influenza."²¹ The flu seemed to be a sensational disease, attacking the elite or the armies, but not the general population.

October, with 98 articles, was still significantly quieter in the news than the *New York Times*.²² However, a disturbing shift occurred in November and December. The *London Times* referenced influenza in 160 articles in November and 107 articles in December. Like the *New York Times*, influenza did not rate as front page news in the *London Times*, regarding dedicated articles. Influenza did feature on the front page more often in one specific area of news. The "Deaths" section, always on the front page, often carried mentions of influenza in death notices and obituaries. With front page deaths noting an increase in influenza, newspaper readers could not ignore that disease was spreading throughout England and the world.

The article frequencies of the *New York Times* and the *London Times* suggested that the second wave of influenza lacked uniformity. A glance at article totals suggested influenza overtook Britain a month later than New York. However, the *London Times*

¹⁷ January 1 to August 31, 1918 featured 120 articles referencing influenza in the *London Times*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *London Times*, September 1918.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Deaths," *London Times*, November 25, 1918, 11.

²² *London Times*, October 1918.

reported British Prime Minister David Lloyd George was “suffering from an attack” of influenza on September 14.²³ The only other mentions of influenza cases in September within England rather than outside the island, were other “elite” class citizens, such as Lady Jane Taylor’s notice of a “severe attack of Spanish influenza” among the local news reports of where British members of high society traveled and where they were vacationing.²⁴ If influenza attacked the elite as early as September, shouldn’t it have already been rampant in the rest of the population?

In this instance, the newspapers failed to tell the entire story. Influenza took hold of both London and the East Coast of the United States at the same time, in September.²⁵ The “pandemic geographies” of the second wave depended entirely on transportation networks and shipping, most notably, the troopships moving between the United States and Britain.²⁶ The troops moving between continents carried influenza with them, and from there they would disperse the disease. Often, railways carrying soldiers home or between military encampments acted as a “vector” to spread the disease quickly and efficiently.²⁷ The *London Times*, silent on the presence of a widespread malady on British soil, worked to preserve the war effort and minimize its epidemic, though the *New York Times* reacted by regular reporting and reassurance that there was nothing to worry over.

The disparity in reporting between the *New York Times* and the *London Times* for September may have been due to several factors, but war censorship and a difference in public health organizations also played a part. Newspapers in both America and Great

²³ “Mr. Lloyd George,” *London Times*, September 14, 1918, 6.

²⁴ “News in Brief,” *London Times*, September 27, 1918, 3.

²⁵ Karl D. Patterson and Gerald F. Pyle, “The Geography and Mortality of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65, no. 1 (1991): 12.

²⁶ Johnson, 50.

²⁷ Johnson, 50-2.

Britain faced various levels of censorship during wartime. Moreover, outbreaks of the disease also attacked morale and could endanger the war effort. In Britain, the Press Bureau, created under the Defence Against the Realm Act, monitored restricted news to prevent releases of military information while also issuing advice to newspapers on how to report developing stories.²⁸ In the United States, under the powers of Postmaster General, Albert S. Burleson, and the newly created Censorship Board, publications that threatened war efforts or “impugned the government’s motives” faced a halt in distribution via mail.²⁹ Further, the Committee on Public Information “officially approved information” or issued “voluntary rules” to newspapers so that all outgoing news received prior approval.³⁰

Influenza threatened morale, vital to patriotism required of both the military and those on the home front. Concerns regarding public panic and invoking the ire of the Press Bureau or the Censorship board may have been a deciding influence in the presentation of influenza news to the public. The *New York Times* became a tool used by Copeland and the Public Health Service to reassure the public, and when that no longer maintained the status quo, to release messages regarding treatment and public health measures.

It was imperative that influenza not challenge the war as front page news, to keep up morale. If people were more concerned with influenza, they would forget their patriotic duty to maintain the war effort or buy more Liberty Bonds. Influenza was the

²⁸ Diean Hopkin, “Domestic Censorship in the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 4 (1970): 154.

²⁹ Anne Cipriano Venzon, *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 132.

³⁰ James Robert Mock and Cedric Larson, *The Words That Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), Kindle edition, chapter 1.

enemy of the home front and this reflected in censorship and article placement in both newspapers. While influenza did find the way to the front page of the *London Times*, the focus was not the actual disease itself, but the dead. Influenza lurked behind much of the war and its effort, but the newspapers did not allow it to overcome the war effort in print on either side of the ocean.

The organizational construction of federalized public health in the United States brought attention to influenza more quickly than was possible in Britain. The Public Health Service expanded under Surgeon General Rupert Blue; it hired medical staff and monitored military conditions during the war.³¹ The Public Health Service mobilized as a part of the war effort to ensure the nation's health. In New York state specifically, Dr. Copeland headed the Board of Health, the state equivalent to the federal Public Health Service. Though it did not initially respond swiftly to flu, Rupert took various measures to combat the disease early on even as Copeland assured the *New York Times* there was no reason to worry. Due to previous fights in New York City against tuberculosis, Copeland had experience.³² As for Britain, Niall Johnson noted,

The Ministry of Health, while foreshadowed, did not exist and public health was largely the preserve of the local authorities and their MOHs [Medical Officers of Health]. The Local Government Board, the national government's public health body, was little more than an advisory body rather than a service delivery authority. Thus, it was a very different place that influenza struck in 1918.³³ That is not to say that there was a total lack of response from British officials.

Local committees and city health boards did their best to control the epidemic. However,

³¹ Gary Gernhart, "A Forgotten Enemy: PHS's Fight Against the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Public Health Reports* 114, (1999): 559.

³² Aimone, 74.

³³ Johnson, 2.

there was no centralized response to the pandemic as there was in the United States. Other committees attempted to help as well.

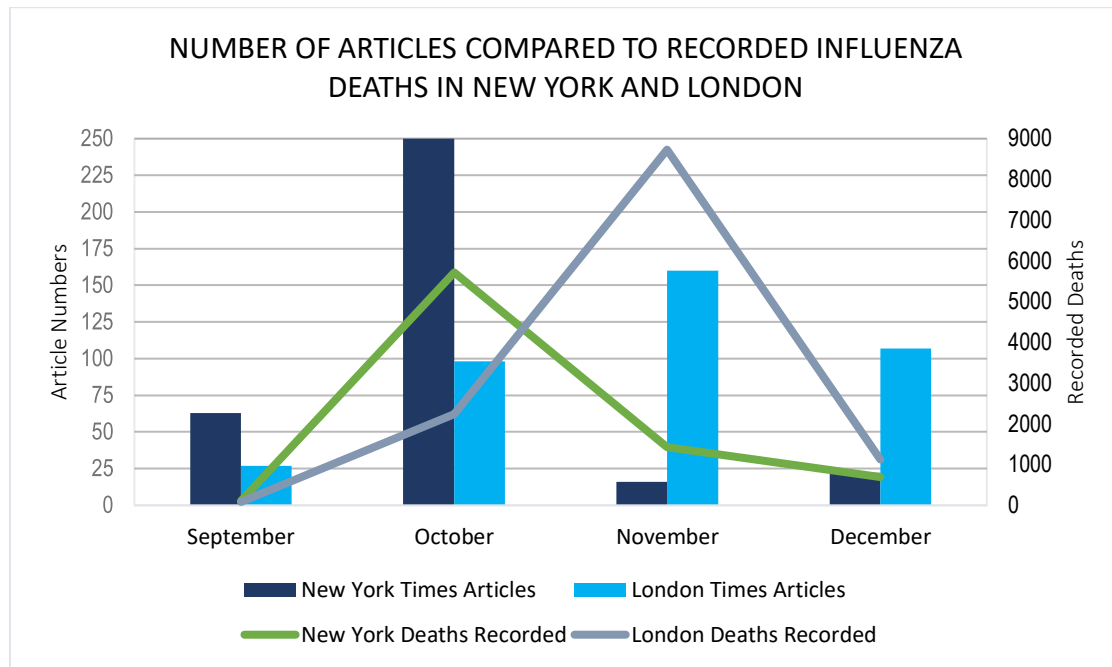


Figure 1: The number of articles in the *New York Times* and the *London Times* compared to the recorded death tolls for New York and London from September to December.

The *London Times* reported that in October, Northampton Food Committee contacted the Ministry of Food to ask for an increase in meat rations “in order to afford increased resistance to influenza.”³⁴ However, with the lack of a centralized force similar to the United States Public Health Service, the *London Times* failed to report even the mere existence of the epidemic during the month of September. Once that was no longer the case, the *London Times* surpassed the number of articles released by the *New York Times*, as seen in Figure 1 above.

Despite the temporal variations in influenza articles in the *New York Times* and the *London Times*, once reporting had started, it only increased until the wave of

³⁴ “Food and Influenza,” *London Times*, October 25, 1918, 3.

influenza receded. With as many as 22 articles and obituaries a day at the height of reporting in both papers, aside from advertisements, it was impossible for the readers of these papers to ignore the pandemic. Notably, both the news coverage and outbreaks of disease peaked concurrently for both New York and London, indicating that news printed in each paper with no delay or lag. People knew about the disease, knew it was spreading, and knew people were dying.³⁵ To read the newspaper was to be aware influenza attacked people, killed them, and increased general anxiety over contracting it. Further, news reports in both papers showed that illness left no one group or area untouched. Whether it was the fighting forces of Britain and the United States, government leaders like Prime Minister Lloyd George or Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, or those on the home front, influenza left no one safe.³⁶

“Owing to Influenza”: Obituaries

Influenza increased in prominence within obituaries and death notices. Death notices were most often written by the family of the deceased, though eventually, it would be a service included in funeral costs.³⁷ The obituary traditionally remained reserved for prominent members of society. However, that shifted to include “common man” obituaries in the 20th century.³⁸ Another obituary trend started as well. Beginning in the late 19th century and for one hundred years later, obituaries adopted “death

³⁵ Influenza death recorded information in Figure 1 retrieved from Niall Johnson, *1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic Mortality in England and Wales Data*, V1 (October 11, 2001), distributed by UK Data Service, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4350-1>. For U.S. mortality rates, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Mortality Statistics 1918* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsushistorical/mortstatsh_1918.pdf.

³⁶ For Lloyd George see “News in Brief,” *London Times*, September 14, 1918, 6; For FDR see “F.D. Roosevelt Spanish Grip Victim,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1918, 14.

³⁷ Janice Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 94.

³⁸ Holly Shreve Gilbert, “A Brief History of the Obituary,” *Funeral Consumers Information Society*, 2011, <http://www.funeralinformationsociety.org/yourlastwrites/history.html>.

journalism” which focused on the details of death and how a person died more often than their life accomplishments.³⁹ Obituaries reflected larger society moods and the First World War left millions of dead and survivors physically and psychologically damaged. Obituaries shifted to the morbid, but more graphic information of a person’s death because there was no other option than to face the immense death occurring during the war. Millions of deaths in a few short years repositioned societies to focus toward mortality.

Morbid attitudes became the norm and found reflection in the obituaries of the time, the influenza pandemic struck. Both the *New York Times* and the *London Times* evoked this style of the obituary. The printed obituaries showcased influenza as a cause of death in notices and obituaries throughout the second wave of illness. Obituaries listed the cause of death more often than other personal details such as career or number of children. However, listing flu as the cause of death did not happen as often as suspected. Pneumonia more commonly appeared in obituaries as the official cause of mortality. This attribution left out influenza in the obituary, but there was never a consensus on how to accurately report influenza-related deaths in either New York or London. As a result, the phrases used to describe influenza in obituaries changed over time.

In the *London Times*, obituaries ranged from short, one sentence entries to several paragraphs dedicated to the deceased. It was “twelve shillings and six pence for three lines or less, and three shillings and six pence for each additional line of about seven words” to print an obituary.⁴⁰ Compared to a loaf of bread which was two pence in 1918,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Charge for Announcements,” *London Times*, September 2, 1918.

obituaries were expensive.⁴¹ Social status also played a role in space dedicated, if one was a prominent member of society, the paper might release the obituary as news. For those enlisted in the military, the length of obituary automatically increased. Officer obituaries often had entire paragraphs placed in a dedicated section, like Captain Kenneth Nigel Wilson Gilbert, M.C.R.F.A., who was “conspicuously gallant,” but died of “influenza following pneumonia” on October 15.⁴² Often, the “Death from Wounds” column included those of active enlistment who died from influenza.⁴³ Nurses and women working for the Red Cross, like Beatrice E. Stevens who died of influenza in Troyes, France, were also listed along with the military servicemen deaths, but also within the “Died of Wounds” columns.⁴⁴

The London *Times* printed death notices and longer obituaries, with officer deaths and obituaries printed separately. During the war, death listings often printed on the front page, with officer deaths and prominent members of society printing in later pages.⁴⁵ However, most obituaries failed to list influenza as the cause of death, though people were dying from the illness. Though London recorded 2,233 influenza deaths for the entire month of October, the London *Times* listed only 38 obituaries that specifically referenced influenza as the cause of death.⁴⁶

The *New York Times* was similar in this regard, as Figure 2 illustrates. For the month of October, officials recorded 8,258 influenza deaths and yet the *New York Times*

⁴¹ James Tucker, *Consumer Price Inflation*, V16 (January 17, 2017), distributed by Great Britain Office of National Statistics, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices>.

⁴² “Deaths,” London *Times*, October 18, 1918, 4.

⁴³ London *Times*, September to December 1918.

⁴⁴ “Deaths,” London *Times*, October 18, 1918, 1.

⁴⁵ London *Times*, September – December 1918.

⁴⁶ Raw data of flu deaths from Johnson, *1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic Mortality in England and Wales Data*. Number of obituaries found in London *Times*, October 1918.

printed just 144 obituaries that listed influenza as the cause of mortality.⁴⁷ Many obituaries used the words “illness,” “pneumonia,” “suddenly” or simply “at home” to describe the deaths of many people, often in the age group of 20-35 years old.⁴⁸ For instance, 30-year-old Frances Allen Fullerton died “suddenly of pneumonia” rather than influenza.⁴⁹ According to Copeland and the board of health, influenza caused this sudden pneumonia which often led to death.⁵⁰ For enlisted men, obituaries often noted the military camp location, without mentioning the cause of death like Lieutenant Harold W. Brown who also died “suddenly” at Camp Leach.⁵¹

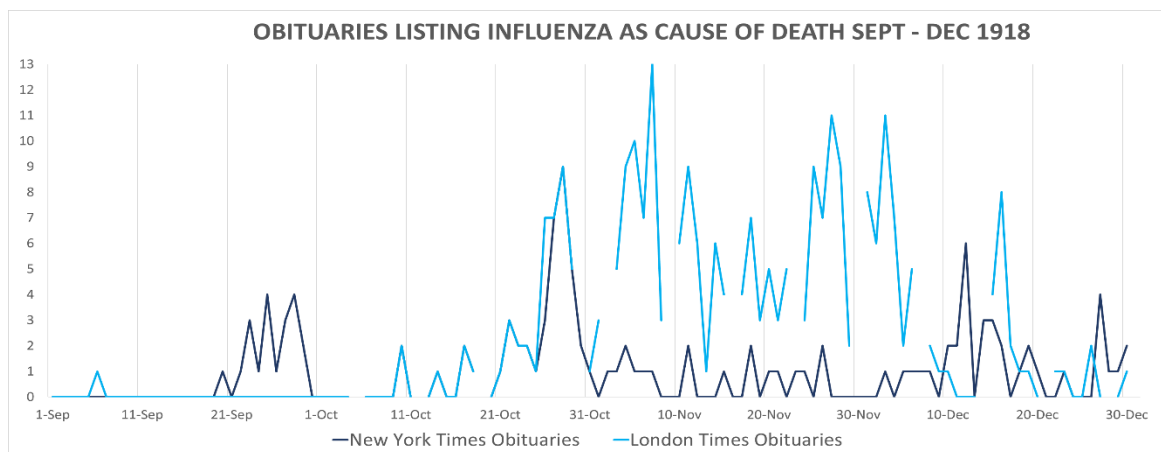


Figure 2: Obituaries with the cause of death listed as influenza in the *New York Times* and the *London Times* from September 1-December 31, 1918. The breaks in the lines of the *London Times* indicate Sunday, the only day of the week the newspaper was not published.

New York Times military obituaries and death notices lacked the separation of the *London Times* with obituaries divided by manner of death. Instead, the *New York Times* printed simple columns of “Died,” with no organization aside from alphabetical order.

⁴⁷ Flu deaths data from U.S. Department of Commerce, *Mortality Statistics 1918*; Number of obituaries from *New York Times*, October 1918.

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, September to December 1918. For specific example, look at “Obituary 3,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1918, 11.

⁴⁹ “Obituary 4,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1918, 23.

⁵⁰ “Influenza Spreads; 150 New Cases Here,” *New York Times*, September 25, 1918, 24.

⁵¹ “Obituary 3,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1918, 13.

The obituary did often have an additional line or two of text regarding the deceased's military service, if applicable. A separate page, usually on page five or six of the paper, listed casualty names with no additional information.⁵² Nurses and other women of service were indiscernible from other obituaries, rarely having any particular mention of service or connection to the Red Cross.⁵³ One notable exception, the obituary of Miss Beatrice Gorman, received a separate, paragraph long memorial as she "gained fame several years ago when she was called in to nurse Colonel Theodore Roosevelt at the time a crank shot him."⁵⁴ Her notoriety was such that it warranted a professionally written obituary, and she was received a military funeral escorted by Red Cross nurses marching, mourning her loss against influenza.⁵⁵

The obituaries alone remained unclear whether these additional deaths were indeed related to influenza. The cause of death listed in the obituaries during the second wave of influenza were full of uncertainty. The death of Isabel Sutherland Cogan, "active in Red Cross work," printed as pneumonia, but in hindsight was likely from a primary influenza infection.⁵⁶ The reasons for ambiguity on the cause of death in both the *New York Times* and the *London Times* rested in the lack of differentiation between influenza and pneumonia by the Public Health Service and medical officers. Primarily, medical science lacked the ability to identify viral agents, including influenza. Scientists knew that there were disease-causing agents smaller than the bacteria visible in microscopes, but lacked the technology to see them. Scientists finally invented an electron microscope

⁵² See example in "313 Casualties Announced in Overseas Army," *New York Times*, September 1, 1918, 6.

⁵³ There were less than five obituaries which listed women's service or mentioned Red Cross and influenza related death in *New York Times*, September – December 1918.

⁵⁴ "Obituary 4," *New York Times*, October 25, 1918, 13.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Obituary 1," *New York Times*, October 25, 1918, 13.

powerful enough to view viral agents during the 1930's, revolutionizing pathogen identification.

To further confuse the issue, scientists had mistakenly identified the cause of influenza to a microbe called Pfeiffer's bacillus, a "false trail" refuted in 1918.⁵⁷ Doctors, nurses, and health officials knew influenza was different but lacked the correct knowledge to understand the intricacies. Aside from a mistaken microbe identity, diagnoses came from doctors working past exhaustion. The obituary of Major Frederick O. Waage, who worked as hospital staff, stated he "dropped dead while on duty" because he "had been constantly on duty during the influenza epidemic."⁵⁸ Confusion between influenza and pneumonia often occurred and because influenza lacked definitive testing to determine a diagnosis. Mixing the two illnesses allowed officials and doctors to fight the pandemic without entirely understanding its nature. As the U.S. Mortality Statistics Report for 1918 stated:

In studying the effects of the pandemic of influenza it is not believed to be the best to study separately influenza and the various forms of pneumonia, bronchitis, and the respiratory diseases, for doubtless many cases were returned as influenza when the deaths were caused by pneumonia, and vice versa. The best method, therefore, seems to be to study as one group deaths from influenza and pneumonia (all forms), disregarding deaths from the other respiratory diseases, which were comparatively few.⁵⁹

This ambiguity was apparent in the *New York Times* in a way much different than the London *Times*. The number of "pneumonia" obituaries surpassed the number of "influenza" obituaries in November in the *New York Times*, sometimes with ratios as high

⁵⁷ Kolata, 27.

⁵⁸ "Obituary 3," *New York Times*, November 1, 1918, 15.

⁵⁹ Dept. of Commerce, *Mortality Statistics 1918*.

as ten pneumonia deaths to every single influenza death.⁶⁰ Other obituaries hyphenated, chronologized, or combined the cause of death as “pneumonia-influenza,” “pneumonia following influenza,” or “influenza and pneumonia.”⁶¹ Causation escaped consensus and therefore the public, reading the *New York Times*, found themselves reading obituaries and articles full of uncertainty.

The London *Times* had fewer ambiguous obituaries. While “pneumonia followed by influenza” frequently listed in obituaries, it was much clearer that influenza contributed to the death.⁶² The four years of heavy death tolls due to warfare left readers acclimated to seeing posts of the dead, and it was apparent that by listing the obituaries on page one of the paper that there was no turning away from it, whatever the cause. New York was still trying to accustom itself to considerable death tolls, but Britain already mourned the lost lives of millions. The situation worsened in November in Britain, as the London *Times* showed a significant increase in influenza-related obituaries as men repatriated. Military men had already died by the thousands in New York and surrounding areas, so there was less of an influx at the end of the war.

Influenza infected the obituaries of the *New York Times* and London *Times* as much as the rest of the news articles in each paper. From September to December 1918, officials scrambled in a lost battle of identifying what illness was killing everyone. Obituaries in these papers revealed the rising death tolls of newspaper readership and that uncertainty. The rise of influenza-related deaths also contributed to “death journalism”

⁶⁰ See “Obituary 1,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1918, 15; and “Obituary 3,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1918. There were ten deaths attributed to pneumonia, while only one death was attributed to influenza, though pneumonia received mention.

⁶¹ Examples found in obituaries from *New York Times*, October 26, 1918. Other examples throughout October and November.

⁶² Example in “Deaths,” London *Times*, October 26, 1918, 2. However, this phrase appeared often in the obituaries in the London *Times* throughout October – December 1918.

that focused on the manner of one's death, rather than their life. As it was the end of the First World War, that focus on death was not surprising. However, influenza continued the trend past the end of the war and cemented its place as a permanent obituary style.

Where the *New York Times* was more ambiguous about the numbers of influenza deaths, the *London Times* seemed less so. The *London Times* dedicated its front page to obituaries, had a separate page devoted to officer obituaries and it was less important how a person died, but more that they had sacrificed their life, intentionally or not. For the *New York Times*, owing to the presence of the U.S. Public Health Service, it was more important to appear to readers as in control and optimistic. For both papers, readers scanned the obituaries and were left with no other option but to contemplate just how many dead were from illness rather than natural causes.

“Do Their Bit Towards Copeland’s Call”: Influenza Advertisements

Influenza quickly moved beyond articles and obituaries and into advertising. Though the advertising atmosphere of 1918 dedicated itself to the war effort, marketing strategies for various products embraced influenza as a selling point. It never overcame the popularity of wartime marketing strategy, but influenza did make an appearance in 58 *New York Times* advertisements and in 30 advertisements for the *London Times*. Some ads in both papers alluded to the epidemic, but avoided using the specific word “influenza.” The products advertised in the *New York Times* varied widely while the *London Times* advertisements focused on preventatives and treatments. The flu ads in both papers contributed to the print exposure of influenza and its presence as a deadly, inescapable malady.

The advertisements of the *New York Times* varied in size, variety, style, and product type. From September to December 1918, 58 ads referenced influenza

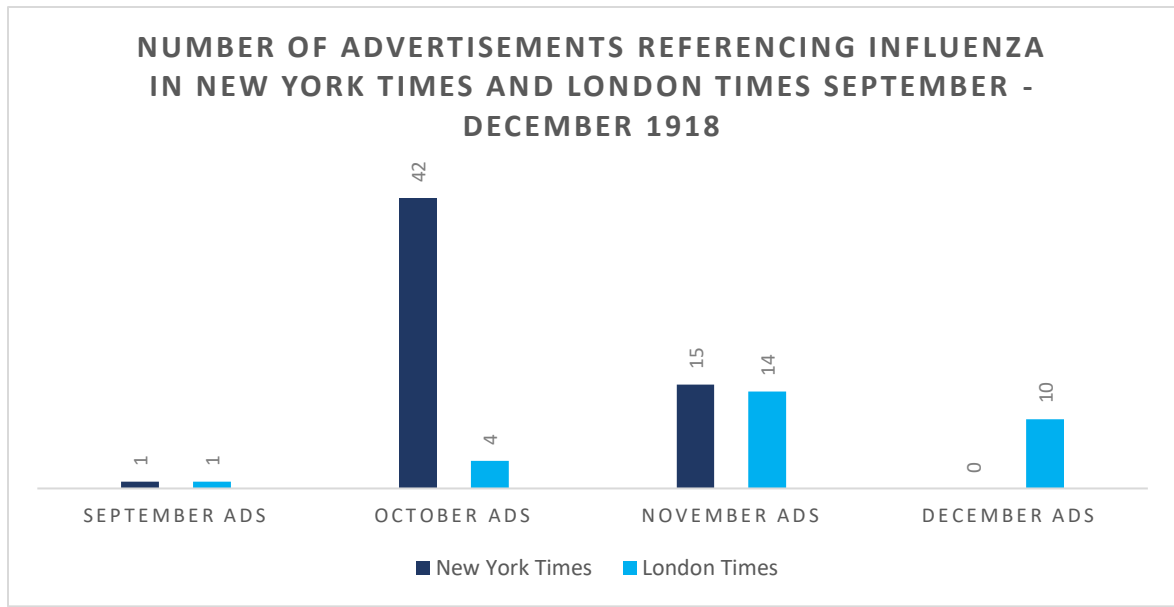


Figure 3: A comparison of the number of advertisements referencing influenza in the *New York Times* and the *London Times* during the months of September to December 1918. These totals include only ads that mention influenza specifically.

specifically and another 20 ads implied influenza by promoting themes of health in times of illness.⁶³ For instance, one September ad suggested a table perfect for the sickroom and another ad sold medicine as a “preventative against Spanish influenza.”⁶⁴ These were September’s only uses of influenza in advertising. However, the increases in mortality led to further flu-inspired advertising. October’s pages increased significantly with 42 influenza ads and an additional 17 ads alluding to flu (Figure 3). These advertisements sold food, medicine, disinfectant, window coverings, and even rum.⁶⁵ Just as quickly, November saw a sharp drop in influenza advertising after November 9 but still had 17 influenza ads. December saw no advertisements that referenced influenza.

⁶³ *New York Times*, September – December 1918.

⁶⁴ “Macy’s Advertisement,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1918, 11; “Borine Advertisement,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1918, 8.

⁶⁵ For rum advertisement see “Bacardi Advertisement,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1918, 5.

The London *Times* never dedicated as much space within its pages to influenza advertisements like the *New York Times* but did have ads that referenced flu before the American paper did. The London paper printed less advertising per issue overall, compared to the *New York Times*. September only had one flu advertisement, but it ran over two weeks earlier.⁶⁶ October saw four ads, but one was a reprint that ran several times each month throughout the second pandemic.⁶⁷ November flu ads totaled 14 with an additional ad that alluded to influenza as well.⁶⁸ December in the London *Times* did contain flu ads, ten advertisements that specifically stated influenza and one product that repeatedly referenced influenza earlier in the month.⁶⁹ Reprints also occurred more often in the London *Times* as 21 advertisements (from a total of 31 influenza advertisements from September to December in Figure 3) were reprints or adjusted reprints of earlier ads in the paper.⁷⁰ Throughout the second wave of influenza, ads in the London *Times* focused almost entirely on medication, disinfection, and preventatives. The only two advertisements outside of these categories belonged to a theater and a call for charitable funds.⁷¹

Like news articles, the high numbers of influenza advertisements lost prominence to the war. For every flu ad in the *New York Times*, ten more ads convinced readers to buy liberty bonds to their “utmost!”⁷² Influenza lost as an advertising campaign to the Fourth Liberty Loan drive in October 1918.⁷³ Flu depressed and concerned readers

⁶⁶ “Formamint,” London *Times*, September 11, 1918, 4. The first *New York Times* flu ad ran September 27.

⁶⁷ “Sanitas,” London *Times*, October 21, 1918, 6. Reprint on October 28, 1918, 4.

⁶⁸ London *Times*, November 1918.

⁶⁹ London *Times*, December 1918; look at “Bovril,” London *Times*, December 9, 1918, 2.

⁷⁰ Reprints included ads that changed wording within advertisement, but same product, style, and portion of text remained the same.

⁷¹ “Theater Notice for Diane Keane,” London *Times*, November 1, 1918, 6. “Serbian Relief Fund,” London *Times*, November 23, 1918, 4.

⁷² “How Much Would the Kaiser Tax Your Business?” *New York Times*, October 1, 1918, 16.

⁷³ Venzon, 492.

compared to the patriotic vogue of war bonds drive sales. War news also bumped advertising campaigns when the papers lacked print space. It happened so often in the *New York Times* that the paper started to announce how many advertisements lost to war news weekly.⁷⁴ Censorship continued to play a part; an advertisement faced rejection if found “unworthy or doubtful.”⁷⁵ Compared to the war effort, influenza in advertising seemed like it was drawing attention to a problem that only took away from the war focus.

The Committee on Public Information rules drove American newspapers to maintain patriotic attitudes and keep up public morale.⁷⁶ The Committee’s advertising arm provided Liberty bond advertising campaigns and obtained “contributions” of free ad space.⁷⁷ Advertising space in the papers was donated “through whatever means of pressure or patriotic inspiration” by companies and individuals who bought the spaces and then donated to the Committee on Public Information.⁷⁸ The advertising space contributed to the Committee surely lessened the available space given to influenza ads and products. However, with constant flu news occurring, the influenza epidemic of New York could not escape capitalization. Sales campaigns still utilized influenza to increase sales for products, regardless of their actual connection to the flu.

In the London *Times*, advertisements lost space to columns of war news as well. Like the United States, British advertising focused instead on war-related advertising, from “trench coats” to guard dogs for the women at home.⁷⁹ The war’s long-term impact

⁷⁴ Example seen in “Omitted,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1918, 8.

⁷⁵ “Censorship,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1918, 83.

⁷⁶ Mock and Larson, chapter 1.

⁷⁷ Mock and Larson, chapter 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Amanda-Jane Doran and Andrew McCarthy, *The Huns Have Got My Gramophone!* (Oxford: Bodelian Library Publishing, 2014), 58.

on the British public remained deeply ingrained. There was the “carry on” spirit where the home front expectation rested on the idea of remaining a “stable strength.”⁸⁰ While this was also true in the United States, to an extent, there was the simple fact that the U.S. entered the war after Britain was already deeply accustomed to the constant battle against weariness and despair.

The familiarity with endurance did not negate the anxiety influenza caused. The *London Times* advertised products specifically focused towards flu prevention and treatment. With less public health initiatives available in Britain as in New York to police medicines and health supplements offered, there was a larger market available to make a profit on these items. Health was imperative to remain strong and carry on. The daily articles listed in the *London Times* did not have the same public health campaign focus found in the *New York Times* which left British readers grasping for authority and ways to keep themselves healthy. However, influenza as a selling point never reached the popularity levels of the *New York Times*, because it was depressing and the public was war-weary, hungry, and heartsick at the losses they suffered.⁸¹ The influenza ads remained in the *London Times* campaigns longer than in the *New York Times*, however, as the flu lasted longer in England as soldiers repatriated and the need for health, especially for soldiers traumatized by four years of combat, seemed more important than ever.

Influenza advertisements occupied strange space in the *New York Times* and the *London Times*. The advertisements brought further attention to the disease and current

⁸⁰ Honigsbaum, 60.

⁸¹ See Collier, 38; and Honigsbaum, 62-63 for public memories about war depression. See also Honigsbaum, 140-144 regarding influenza related depression and suicides.

state of illness and attempted to capitalize on the situation. On the other hand, often, flu ads promoted products that helped treat or prevent the flu and thus welcomed. Rarely were products advertised in the *New York Times* or *London Times* visibly exploitative, but they existed. Their presence was further evidence that influenza bombarded the public via the newspapers. The flu was so widespread and inescapable that it became a selling point.

Conclusion: “Spanish Influenza is a Serious Matter!”

Influenza took hold of societies across the globe in September 1918 and refused to let go until December. In the last months of a global war framed as a victory, influenza raged throughout both the United States and England. Despite the dedication to the war effort, whether genuine or via government pressure, the *New York Times* and the *London Times* succumbed to the ravages of flu even as their readers fell sick. Countless pages of article space, obituaries, and advertisements dedicated to the flu graced the pages of both papers for the second and most deadly wave of ‘Spanish’ flu. The *New York Times* and *London Times* operated under a miasma of wartime censorship and yet, still flu persevered.

The disease and its presence in the world bombarded the public via these newspapers. It was inescapable. Everywhere warned of how to prevent disease or what to do if symptoms arose and created an underlying, constant, and pervasive fear that separated itself from the emotions of the war even as it embedded itself into those fighting the war. The news reported attempted to soothe and reassure: flu was under control, it was happening in other areas, to other people, it was well in hand, but the vast number of articles and constant conversation about what was happening did not reassure, it caused fear. The obituaries, already dark and focusing more on how one died than their

life, revealed how many were dying. Advertisements used the flu to sell health, clothing, windows, and even life insurance. Anyone could fall victim; anyone could die. The *New York Times* and *London Times* perpetuated influenza's fear induced hold upon the world.

CHAPTER 2: A COMPLICATED NEWS STORY

The September 22 Sunday edition of the *New York Times* reported that influenza “reaped a harvest in the army cantonments” of the United States.¹ The article reported more than 6,000 cases in Camp Devens and noted that other camps were falling victim quickly.² In the London *Times*, there was news of influenza “raging violently” in Switzerland with 12,000 cases among the Swedish Army.³ The story of influenza in 1918 was a story of the First World War. The disease struck soldiers, bombarded them with illness and death, and used them to spread further to civilian populations. Flu became the malady home fronts suffered, even as victory became a reality. However, influenza also became materialized as an entity outside of the war experience. This intertwined and complicated narrative lived in the pages of the media. Influenza’s military connection began in the newspapers. The connection started with the soldiers and became part of war news, but eventually the newspapers could not stop influenza from becoming its own reportable event that grew momentum throughout the epidemic.

Influenza became a separate story within the public’s experience of the war due to their role as victims of the pandemic. News reports moved away from discussing flu as a war malady and concentrated on its civilian impacts, even as flu remained entrenched in the minds and bodies of soldiers. Influenza ripped public faith away from officials and medical personnel, leaving only distrust and anger.⁴ Yet, the pandemic was still a war story. Flu smashed the barrier of geographical distance between the United States and what was occurring overseas. The relationship between influenza in the war within the

¹ “Spanish Influenza Much Like Grippe,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1918, 37.

² Ibid.

³ “Influenza and Dysentery,” *London Times*, September 18, 1918, 8.

⁴ “The Epidemic in America,” *London Times*, October 30, 1918, 7; Bristow, 160-170; Collier 238-239.

New York Times allowed influenza to move beyond a war malady and into a dangerous public enemy. For those reading the *New York Times*, influenza brought the war home in a horrific way. The horror of constant disease and threat of death in the news caused the American public to experience war more personally, though it was against an invisible foe rather than facing Germans at the Western Front. As the war ended, optimism returned quickly in the *New York Times*.

For the London *Times* and its civilian readers, enduring influenza added more melancholy in a collective memory of loss and despair. Influenza caused the British public to endure further dread and loss after a long, horrific war. Especially after Armistice, influenza coverage exploded in the London *Times*, as if the media and public no longer knew how to move on from discussing painful subjects. As British soldiers returned home and brought the disease with them, the concept of peaceful existence seemed further and further away. For those reading the London *Times*, influenza created a continued atmosphere of suffering. Influenza's story in both newspapers remained a piece of the war experience, but it also evolved into a new entity in the news, one that held dual existence as part of the war and as something else entirely.

“Must Report All Influenza”: American Army Camps

An army physician remembered as only “Roy” wrote to his fellow physician “Burt” from Camp Devens Massachusetts in September of 1918. He wrote, “One can stand it to see one or twenty men die, but to see those poor devils dropping like flies gets on your nerves. We have been averaging about 100 deaths per day.”⁵ Influenza struck army camps on the East Coast of the United States particularly hard and with remarkable

⁵ K. Lee Lerner and Brenda Wilmoth Lerner, eds., “Camp Devens Letter” in *Medicine, Health, and Bioethics: Essential Primary Sources* (Detroit: Gale, 2006), 306-309.

speed (See Figure 4 below).⁶ The *New York Times* offered daily updates to readers on the army camp numbers of ill and dead throughout the United States as flu infections raced from soldier to soldier. The first reports of illness in the army camps began September 15, 1918, in Camps Devens and Lee. Camp Devens reported 8,000 cases of influenza to the Surgeon General along with a request for more nurses.⁷ Further, the *New York Times* reported that the camp would not undergo quarantine because “it had been decided at

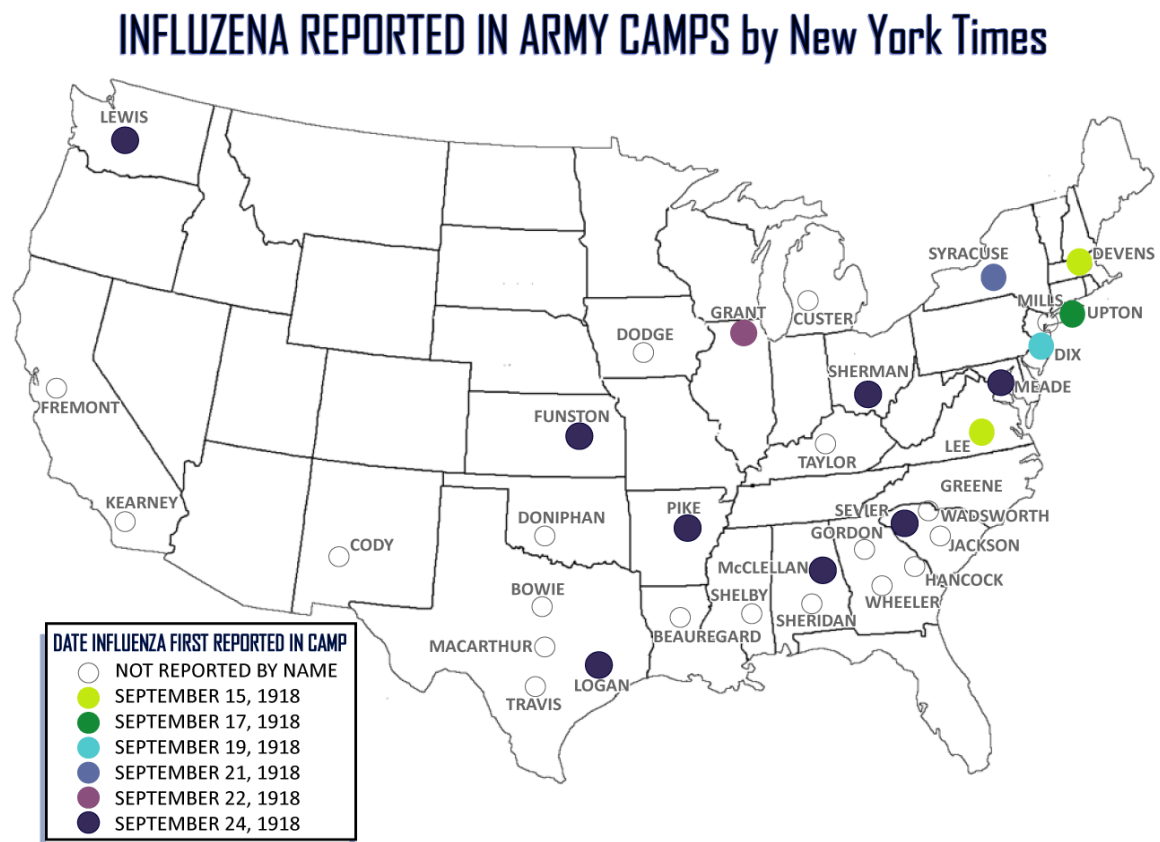


Figure 4: A map of all army camps in the United States in 1918 with the timeline of influenza reported by the *New York Times*. The first two camps with flu, Camp Lee and Camp Devens, were reported on September 15. Flu spread across the U.S. within nine days. The *New York Times* reported that other camps were infected, but did not list them by name.

⁶ Map created by Jessica Donnelly. Sources referenced were *New York Times*, September – October 1918; Willis J. Abbott, *The United States in the Great War* (New York: Leslie-Judge Co., 1919), 42.

⁷ “Influenza Epidemic Hits Camp Devens,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1918, 14.

Washington that this would not stop the spread of influenza.”⁸ The same article reported that illness also struck Camp Lee, but the commandant felt the situation was “not serious.”⁹

From the two camps on the East Coast, influenza overtook the army. The *New York Times* reported updates on army camps in the United States daily in the last two weeks of September and the first week of October. Roy’s letter to his friend lamented, “We eat it, live it, sleep it, and dream it, to say nothing of breathing it 16 hours a day.”¹⁰ The constant pressure of influenza on the army camps did not escape the readers of the *New York Times*. On September 24, 1918, the headlines on page nine read, “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases. Seven New Camps Send Records of Patients. Total Army Cases, 20,211.” There was no doubt that influenza ran rampant through the camps and cantonments.

By September 24, 1918, just nine days from the first reports of sickness in the army camps, influenza had traveled across the country and struck in Camp Lewis in the Pacific Northwest.¹¹ Out of the 34 army camps in the United States, the *New York Times* reported cases totals for 20 camps by name in September.¹² The influenza epidemic in the camps received a high amount of attention in the paper with as many as three articles a day discussing influenza and its dangers to the army camps.¹³ The case numbers were rising exponentially, and thousands of men were falling ill. The *New York Times* quoted Surgeon General Blue on September 26 who warned that the “malady had made its

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “Camp Devens Letter.”

¹¹ “Army Camps Report 2,225 Cases,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1918, 9.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ On two dates, September 24, 1918 and September 26, 1918 the *New York Times* printed three articles on the topic of army camps and influenza.

appearance in 26 states from the Atlantic to the Pacific,” and it was time to consider “drastic steps to curb its spread” because 29,002 men in active service were ill.¹⁴

The *New York Times*’s reporting on the army camps could only panic readers. Vast numbers of men falling victim to influenza reported in an alarmingly blunt style left readers with the knowledge that influenza was an epidemic. Each update simply listed the names of the camps, case numbers, and death totals. For any reader with a son or husband in the camps, the fear would have been palpable. Official reassurances, like that of the commandant, appeared to be dismissive rather than positive when placed in the same articles that listed the numbers of influenza. The *New York Times* told the story of an illness decimating the fighting forces of the United States, and the stark news each day hammered readers at home in a way that reports of overseas fighting did not. This news was of soldiers, at Upton, Dix, or Devens, who were local men rather than faceless fighters. Influenza news and totals refused to abate in September and October, and it kept getting increasingly worse.

The impact of so many falling ill and dying in the camps upon the war effort was immense. Influenza decimated the fighting forces in training across the United States. Annual death rates for soldiers in training rose “almost one hundredfold from 2.3 per thousand the week of September 13 to 206 per thousand the week of October 11.”¹⁵ Soldier morale plummeted, due to the fear not only of falling ill but also of losing out on the ultimate masculine war experience. Dying as a “weakling in bed with a fever” was not a heroic death on the battlefield.¹⁶ To make matters worse, influenza often caused

¹⁴ “Influenza in 26 States,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1918, 24.

¹⁵ Byerly, 75-6.

¹⁶ Byerly, 138.

delirium, long-lasting depression, and horrific physical manifestations where the stricken turned “blue as huckleberries and spit blood.”¹⁷ Even those who survived in the army camps found themselves in shock as they received orders to dig graves for influenza victims.¹⁸

By the end of September, the *New York Times* reported that influenza canceled the draft call for 142,000 men due to the dangers of influenza within the army camps.¹⁹ While the *New York Times* reported on the war and attempted to keep up home front morale, it also caused fear and uncertainty with the army camp reports. Other military activity news remained censored but communicated an elevated level of patriotic optimism or supported a victorious war outcome. Stories in war news praised troops from New York, “youngsters trained at Camp Upton” fighting “with the spirit of seasoned veterans under most difficult weather conditions.”²⁰ In contrast, the influenza reports regarding the army men were severe and miserable. There was no patriotic language or uplifting tales of heroism in the influenza reports of the *New York Times*. There was only grim news, and any positive spin attempted felt hollow.

The influenza misery continued to spread. Even as the news of the military camps became a daily feature in the *New York Times*, influenza broke away from being simply part of the war narrative. The fear of infection and the quick spread of disease ensured that influenza became a newsworthy topic of its own regard. At the end of September and beginning of October, the *New York Times* moved away from discussing influenza in relation to the war effort and turned its focus to the civilian population.

¹⁷ Collier, 39, 178.

¹⁸ Collier, 249.

¹⁹ “Influenza Stops Flow to the Camps of Drafted Men,” *New York Times*, September 27, 1918, 1, 6.

²⁰ “Americans Push Ahead,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1918, 1.

Influenza was more than a war story to report; it was an important feature in the civilian landscape. The public health responses by Dr. Copeland and the Board of Health featured in the *New York Times* moved away from discussing soldiers and moved into discussing civilian action and prevention.²¹ Commissioner Copeland rallied the New York Board of Health, while Surgeon General Blue worked from Washington to ensure prevention measures and treatment plans printed in the newspaper so it was clear to the public that officials were working to minimize the epidemic.²² Despite the paper's attempts to generate an "upbeat chorus of optimism with expressions of faith in modern science and a conviction that progress was sure to follow," the underlying unease about influenza was inescapable.²³ The public could not accept an "optimistic narrative" when that narrative was "of loss that ended in lives shattered by dislocation, grief, and despair."²⁴ Readers not only feared the impact on their loved ones enlisted in the army, but also worried for themselves. Influenza became a separate topic of news, one that brought fear and loss outside of the war experience.

"Imperial and Foreign News Items": British Military News

The London *Times* was, in comparison, very nearly silent on the status of the British Army regarding influenza, at least during the war. No daily camp or trench totals printed for those influenza attacked, but descriptions of foreign fighting forces suffering at the hands of influenza made their way into war news. The London *Times* portrayed influenza as a scourge impacting the other armies during wartime. The paper reported on

²¹ *New York Times*, September 26 – October 15, 1918.

²² "New York Prepared for Influenza Siege," *New York Times*, September 19, 1918, 11.

²³ Nancy K. Bristow, *American Pandemic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 157.

²⁴ Bristow, 157.

September 11, 1918, that the total number of the Swiss Army influenza cases was 16,640, and if totals included “slight cases not necessitating the interruption of duty” then it was not an “exaggeration to say that 90 percent of the forces were attacked.”²⁵ Germany also received attention. The London *Times* reported on October 24, 1918, that “Spanish influenza is increasing throughout the German Empire” and that October 4 saw 724 cases within 24 hours.²⁶ The newspaper implied influenza in the British fighting force through the mentions of soldiers dying of influenza in obituaries, but the disease seemed to be just one more thing causing suffering.

After four years of combat, millions of men already listed in the army casualty reports, and the home front repeatedly battered by loss, an epidemic of influenza likely seemed trivial to the readers of the London *Times*. Obituaries indicated that servicemen were dying from influenza even as they were dying in combat. Obituaries provided the single most common instance of influenza reporting in conjunction with British forces. Other articles, such as the October “Parliament” report, specified “numerous conferences have taken place between representatives” including military, naval, medical, and bacteriologist authorities since the epidemic’s beginning.²⁷ Moreover, the London *Times* hedged around the sickness experienced by their military men. Foreign militaries, rather than British soldiers, endured and suffered from influenza within the war according to the London *Times*. Whether that was by design or due to political pressure, the result was the same. Influenza in the press was a war malady suffered by enemy militaries until it

²⁵ “News in Brief,” London *Times*, September 11, 1918, 7.

²⁶ “Imperial and Foreign Items,” London *Times*, October 17, 1918, 5.

²⁷ “Parliament,” London *Times*, October 29, 1918, 10.

became its own separate, reportable piece of news like in the *New York Times* due to the impacts on civilians at home.

The lack of reporting was not due to a lack of information. The paper often mentioned that hospitals faced “a large number of soldiers,” but the specific numbers of ill soldiers, unlike those of civilians, remained unknown or unreleased.²⁸ The quiet was also not due to a lack of record keeping. The London *Times* reported civilian cases in the various London boroughs regularly.²⁹ It was most likely due to wartime censorship to not worry the people at home and keep up morale. The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) regulated any news interpreted as “undermining the morale of the British people,” and journalists admitted they misconstrued or omitted facts during wartime reporting.³⁰ Influenza seemed negligible compared to the “scale of loss and deprivation caused by the Great War.”³¹ For the London *Times*, influenza started as a quiet war story and one best read between the lines of the actual words printed on the page. It was evident that something was happening and that people were sick, but unlike the *New York Times*, the pages of the London *Times* spoke of civilian concerns long before openly discussing the military impacts.

There were several exceptions to this relative silence while the war was ongoing, particularly in the newsprint reports of Parliament sessions. Two articles, “Influenza Cases at the Crystal Palace” and “Illness at Blandford Camp,” from the October 31, 1918, Parliament section of the paper discussed military servicemen suffering from influenza.³²

²⁸ “Rise in ‘Influenza’ Death-Roll,” London *Times*, November 7, 1918, 3.

²⁹ See example in “The Epidemic,” London *Times*, November 1, 1918, 7.

³⁰ Roy Greenslade, “First World War: How State and Press Kept Truth Off the Front Page,” *British Journalism Review* 25, no. 2 (2014): 52-58. The article mentions journalist William Beach Thomas, quoted as being “deeply ashamed” of his war reporting.

³¹ Johnson, 164.

³² “Parliament,” London *Times*, October 31, 1918, 10.

At the Crystal Palace, the report noted that “the only mortality during that period [the past six months] has been from an epidemic of influenza.”³³ The *Times* also reported in that same section that Blandford Camp fell victim to influenza on September 21 and up to that date had suffered 252 cases of influenza, but that “everything possible had been done to provide necessities and comforts.”³⁴

These exceptions, along with various reports of foreign armies fighting, presented the readers of the London *Times* with just enough information to frighten them. Articles warned of influenza outbreaks in Bombay, Madrid, Stockholm, and a list of other locations.³⁵ There were no reports of an official response or a health campaign like in the *New York Times*. Some articles stated only that authorities were “taking measures to render assistance” in areas such as Tangier.³⁶ Preventative measures and treatments for British soldiers never printed in the newspaper, unlike the various articles in the *New York Times*. There was not enough information in the paper for readers to truly understand the situation for their soldiers; they only knew, based on news reports, that influenza was breaking out throughout the world and there was a nebulous assistance provided only when cases reached epidemic levels.

Within a few days of Armistice, the *London Times* abandoned its silence regarding influenza outbreaks in the military and published an article titled “Influenza in the Army” on November 14, 1918.³⁷ Though short on details, the article discussed September cases of influenza for British soldiers, though a case only counted if doctors

³³ “Influenza at the Crystal Palace,” *London Times*, October 31, 1918, 10.

³⁴ “Illness at Blandford Camp,” *London Times*, October 31, 1918, 10.

³⁵ “The Influenza Epidemic,” *London Times*, October 3, 1918, 7.

³⁶ “Fighting Influenza in Tangier,” *London Times*, October 12, 1918, 4.

³⁷ “Influenza in the Army,” *London Times*, November 14, 1918, 10.

admitted the serviceman to a hospital.³⁸ The article revealed that influenza forced 110 officers and 2,791 “other ranks” to be admitted to the hospital, though these numbers lacked the details “in the case of France.”³⁹ The article acknowledged the presence of influenza in British fighting forces but offered no optimistic responses. Though the Armistice signaled the end of fighting, the war still technically had not ended. The Defence of the Realm Act continued to ensure censored news, but pieces released in the *London Times* began to tell more of the story of the British military fighting influenza.

“In No Mood for Such Noise”: Armistice

Though the war would not fully conclude for some time, and the slow process of demobilization would take months, the Armistice was a relaxation point for the *London Times* in its influenza reporting regarding the larger impact on the British people. The *Times* reported candidly about the widespread incidence of flu, stating that there was “reasonable grounds for believing that some 6,000,000 people have died of influenza and pneumonia during the past 12 weeks throughout the world.”⁴⁰ Reporting global totals of influenza put the story of its widespread devastation into the public sphere. With the previous reports of outbreaks around the world, the *London Times* already had established a global context regarding influenza: the disease was everywhere, and it disrupted whole societies. However, aside from mentions of school closures and civilian cases reported in the paper’s “News in Brief” section, there were only snippets of information released to the public about the impact on the war, the economy, or civilian life.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Future of Germany,” *London Times*, December 18, 1918, 8.

Whereas before Armistice, the *London Times* only reported domestic cases and international military cases separately to keep the narratives within the confines of the war, post-Armistice reporting led to the creation of an internal rather than global context for the influenza pandemic. While the *London Times* provided global context via influenza outbreaks and cases around the world, particularly elsewhere in the Empire, it also included the status of influenza at home. Like the *New York Times*, the *London Times* reported case numbers locally and public decrees or school closures prior to Armistice, but there was an increase in London's domestic coverage post-Armistice as well. The number of articles discussing influenza in London increased in number and focused specifically on civilian experiences (Figure 5).⁴¹ In November and December,

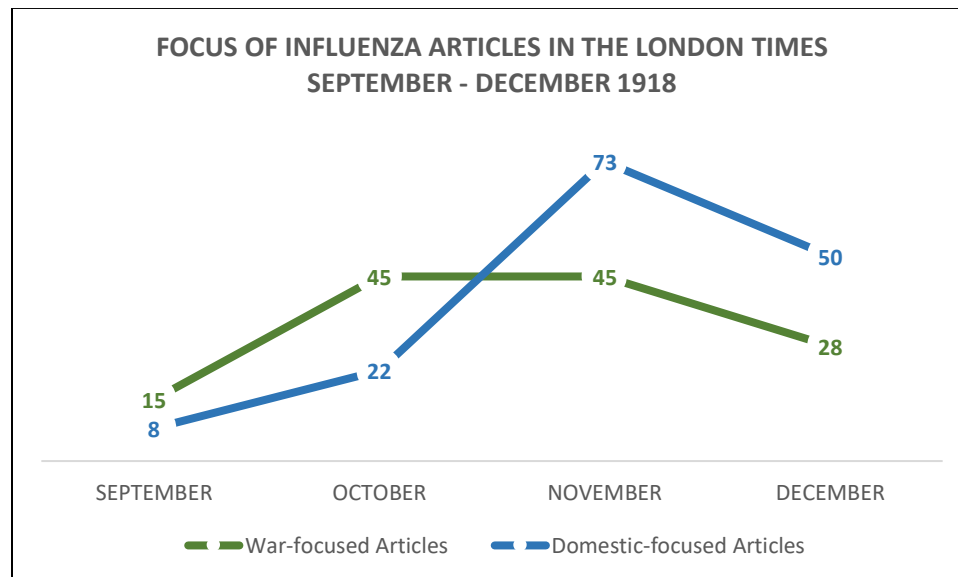


Figure 5: Focus of articles in the London Times from September - December 1918. War-focused articles included imperial and foreign news or influenza in fighting forces. Domestic-focused articles concentrated on influenza in England or in relation to civilians. No obituaries included.

⁴¹ *London Times*, October – December 1918. Influenza articles with a domestic focus numbered 240 in October, 73 in November, and 50 in December. Articles with a war focus numbered 45 in October, 45 in November, and 28 in December. These groupings did not include obituaries or advertisements.

domestically focused articles mentioning influenza were nearly double that of articles discussing influenza and the war. Domestic news included political news, school and public area closures, flu case totals, and health suggestions. War news focused on cases of influenza within the military, influenza elsewhere in the empire and in foreign countries as well as flu's impact on the war itself. Influenza moved beyond the designation of a war malady left undiscussed and into the public sphere.

The influenza epidemic had expanded beyond a disease foreign armies were suffering elsewhere. Influenza coverage in the *London Times* became focused on what was happening on the home front. One article described "a mother and her three young children, victims of influenza" buried in a single grave to save on funeral costs.⁴² The sad story had no connection to what was happening in the trenches; it completely focused on the horror experienced by families at home. Influenza moved beyond the scope of the war as a different entity, one separate from the war experience. It would never completely shed its association with the war, but then, the war left visible scars across continents and people, particularly in Europe and Britain, that refused ever to fade. There was no escaping the flu in the *London Times* whether it lurked in obituaries, news articles, or advertisements. Even with the end of the war in sight, peace was far off.

After the November 11, 1918 Armistice, the *London Times* remained somber and grim. One article discussed London's reaction to the news of the war's ceasefire by stating, "On the surface, it was a romping frolic. Buntingitis [flags hanging everywhere] had broken out as severely and as suddenly as influenza" but "for every hundreds of people in the street there were thousands at home in no mood for such noise."⁴³ That

⁴² "Influenza Still Severe," *London Times*, November 19, 1918, 3.

⁴³ "The Surface and the Deep," *London Times*, November 12, 1918, 11.

somber tone echoed the larger social trends in Britain. In his analysis of influenza memoirs collected by Richard Collier, Mark Honigsbaum noted:

There was no euphoria in the streets of London... Caroline Playne commented in her diary... "People look brighter, but the thing is not yet quite believed or accepted. All the consequences of life adapted to war conditions have become so settled you cannot break through." As the populace steeled themselves for the possibility of further bad news, the influenza epidemic reinforced their sense of pessimism and gloom. "Influenza very bad in places," commented Payne... "Depression on faces very marked in trains and trams. People very full of sad cases of death from influenza. A great sense of dread about everything."⁴⁴

The narrative of Britain's influenza intertwined with that of the Great War, but unlike the American story, it was one of further suffering, of continued fear, and perhaps even punishment on the heels of such an extended conflict. Even with the end of the war, influenza prevented peace for Britain.

"The Trouble with Influenza": A War Story?

The *New York Times* and the *London Times* relayed the story of influenza differently regarding its place in the war. The differences were a direct result of experiences endured by the public. Influenza manifested the war experience differently for the readers of each paper. For the United States and readers of the *New York Times*, the horrors of loss and depredation of the war never took hold as deeply as in Britain and the for the readers of the *London Times*. Much of that was due to the length of time in combat. The United States joined the war only in May 1917, whereas Britain had declared war on Germany three long years earlier. Those additional years of carnage, of shelling, bombing, and whole communities losing their sons, husbands, and friends to the war, left overwhelming grief and despair etched into British memory.

⁴⁴ Honigsbaum, 95.

The divergence between the influenza narrative experience by readers of the *New York Times* and *London Times* also rested in the numbers of military men who died. Through four years of war, the British endured the knowledge that their fighting men had a “one in two chance of surviving the war without being killed, wounded, or taken prisoner.”⁴⁵ German air raids caused civilian casualties, bringing the war outside the door.⁴⁶ After enduring such heavy losses in the British army and even on the home front, influenza simply became one more horrific thing trying to end lives. Americans lost more men to disease than combat during their time in the war. The most conservative estimates determined influenza sickened one million men and killed nearly 30,000 in army camps before they could ever enter combat.⁴⁷ The influenza epidemic in America moved through the army camps in a shockingly brief time. It was not a long-lasting experience, but one so fast as to leave the whole country wondering what the hell happened.

One hundred or more deaths a day in a single camp, as Roy spoke of in his letter, seemed drastic for the American public. The deaths of so many army men in the camps were traumatic but occurred in such a short span of time that they manifested as shock, awe, and confusion, rather than devastation. The deep-rooted melancholy prevalent in the *London Times* did not exist in the *New York Times*. With the declaration of Armistice, the time for dwelling on the flu in the *New York Times* was over. The American paper celebrated Armistice, and articles, advertisements, and photographs all contained

⁴⁵ Patricia Jalland, “Bereavement and Mourning (Great Britain),” *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, October 8, 2014, http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_great_britain.

⁴⁶ Ian Castle, *The First Blitz: Bombing London in the First World War* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015), 28.

⁴⁷ Leonard Ayres, *The War with Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 120.

optimism and a congratulatory tone. Advertisements announced “victory sales” and congratulated the public on “the victory of righteousness” and a “peace that made men frantic with joy.”⁴⁸ War-end optimism carried over to any future articles containing influenza. On November 14, 1918, the paper printed an article titled, “Epidemic A Thing of the Past!”⁴⁹ Though the headline was highly optimistic, the text of the article described the increase in case numbers.⁵⁰

Articles mentioning the flu disappeared quickly, going from hundreds in October to less than fifty in November and December combined.⁵¹ It seemed the *New York Times* determined it was time to forget influenza entirely, part of the war or not. Disease had no place in the celebratory environment the *New York Times* and the public were trying to establish. A public health official complained, “it is remarkable to see the placidity by which the people have generally taken the almost sudden loss.”⁵² The saturation of influenza news disappeared into the war once again, a dark, infectious stain on victory celebrations throughout the country. Americans turned away from the trauma, even as Britain struggled to be free of it.

Though it began as a war-related story, influenza in the *New York Times* quickly moved beyond the scope of the war. By then, with both civilians and army men sick, it was too late to alleviate the fear caused by such aggressive reporting. While there were attempts by military or public health officials to mitigate dread, the mere presence of the articles negated any positive spin. The public’s faith in doctors, officials, and public

⁴⁸ “Advertisements,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1918, 4.

⁴⁹ “Epidemic A Thing of the Past!” *New York Times*, November 14, 1918, 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *New York Times*, October – December 1918. Influenza articles numbered 250 in October, 22 in November, and 16 in December.

⁵² Crosby, 322.

health authorities was nonexistent. An editorial in the *New York Times* commented that preventative action by all officials was delayed and ineffectual, “characteristic of practically everything of a precautionary or protective nature that has been done in this country by the official and professional guardians of its health since the menace of the epidemic was brought to their attention.”⁵³ Forced optimism and influenza depressed the readers of the *New York Times* because it brought the war to American shores and military officials were helpless, and the public knew it.

U.S. medical officers were not heroes, nor did they successfully find a treatment against the enemy, a microbe more nebulous than the Germans the army was fighting. In all other areas of military medicine during the war, innovation created new methods of treatment and reform, but in the face of influenza, medicine and science failed completely.⁵⁴ The *New York Times* perpetuated the public’s lacking confidence in those who attempted to stop the disease. From the beginning of the epidemic in New York, the *New York Times* printed headlines suggesting that doctors, military scientists, and public health officials successfully fought to diminish influenza. Early in the epidemic, at the end of September, the *New York Times* released news of a vaccine developed by Army medical scientists to combat pneumonia and influenza.⁵⁵ Over the course of the second wave from September to December, the paper printed over twenty headlines that influenza was either “in check,” “on the decline,” or officials were “active in influenza

⁵³“Topics of the Times,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1918, 14.

⁵⁴ Byerly, 176-177.

⁵⁵ “Army Has Serum to Check Influenza,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1918, 15.

fight!”⁵⁶ As the case numbers at army camps and in New York boroughs increased, these articles seemed hollow.

The London *Times* did not print influenza articles with optimistic titles suggesting an end to the pandemic throughout the course of the entire second wave. From September to December, the articles discussing the flu were either stark and to the point, such as “Influenza Epidemic” or “The Influenza Scourge,” or “Toll of Influenza.”⁵⁷ Several articles throughout the second wave discussed treatment, but even those article titles were blunt, stating the inoculation was an “experiment.”⁵⁸ Some articles were accusatory and angry, suggesting officials expected the epidemic and there were “official warnings” as early as August.⁵⁹ There was no room left for confidence in the readers of the London *Times* after the horrifying headlines printed throughout the war.

Anger and accusations at medical officials, the government, and the military were common in the London *Times*, more so than in the *New York Times*. In the article suggesting the epidemic was “foretold,” it stated unequivocally,

The idea that the epidemic could not have been foreseen is finally disposed of. It was foreseen, and that by a very important official body, which actually drew the attention of the health authorities to the danger. The claim that adequate steps to meet it were not made cannot, therefore, be disputed on the ground that no warning was given... Thirty-three of the deaths recorded in our obituary columns on page 1 to-day are attributed to influenza or pneumonia or the two diseases jointly.”⁶⁰

The accusation printed in the paper was a serious one and indicated that there was little trust for officials or medical officers. Researchers and medical staff expected to return

⁵⁶ *New York Times*, September – December 1918. Article titles indicated the epidemic was receding or under control. For September, two articles printed; October saw fifteen articles, and November and December both saw two articles.

⁵⁷ “Influenza Epidemic,” *London Times*, October 19, 1918, 3; “Influenza Scourge,” *London Times*, October 23, 1918, 3; “Toll of Influenza,” *London Times*, November 28, 1918, 3.

⁵⁸ “Inoculation Against Influenza, Air Ministry’s Experiment,” *London Times*, November 9, 1918, 3.

⁵⁹ “Epidemic Foretold, Official Warning Last August,” *London Times*, November 6, 3.

⁶⁰ “Epidemic Foretold, Official Warning Last August,” *London Times*, November 6, 3.

after the spring wave earlier that year, and their warnings were ignored. However, they also made no attempt, according to the paper, to further warn the public.

Support and promotion for the disgruntled opinions of the London *Times* printed in several letters to the editor by readers. Clifford Allbutt wrote to the editor, “we are very grateful, and not least for your imperative call for that elusive Ministry of Health which some of us have been demanding for a generation, but hitherto in vain!”⁶¹ The paper and its readers were frustrated with the lack of a definitive health organization aside from the Local Government Board, which did not release any official public health response until the end of October 1918.⁶² Most medical personnel, in short supply already as they were attached to the military and already abroad, faced derision and anger for their inability to provide a cure or care beyond suggestions of rest and fluids.⁶³ Like those reading the *New York Times*, the readers of the London *Times* distrusted and saw only failure in those attempting to control the pandemic. Inability to stop influenza, the failure to prevent rising deaths by officials, left the public panicked, angry, and afraid.

“Pyres of Influenza Dead”

Influenza swept through American army camps and the *New York Times* to leave families at home panicked and mourning their losses, much like active combat losses did for British society. Influenza had broken the barrier of protection the Atlantic Ocean provided during wartime, and the pervasive environment of imminent danger at home was intolerable. As it moved beyond army camps and began infecting the civilian population, influenza evolved into a different type of news story which moved beyond the war to invade everyday life. The negative impact would never reach the deep levels of

⁶¹ “Research in Medicine to the Editor of the Times,” London *Times*, October 31, 1918, 7.

⁶² Johnson, 131.

⁶³ Johnson, 130.

melancholy that resonated in the *London Times*, but the *New York Times* assaulted readers and left them with a constant sense of loss and unease. However, once the war ended and the second wave of flu passed, the newspaper and public stopped discussing it via print, preferring instead to forget flu and concentrate on war victories.

The *London Times* and its readers struggled to forget the trauma of war, and influenza became another reason to mourn. The pervading sense of deep melancholy resulted in stark reporting with little optimism in the news reports of the pandemic. With information focused on armies elsewhere and civilian experiences, the silence in the *London Times* regarding influenza's impact on an already overburdened British fighting force only raised more questions and confusion. Anger became apparent in both the newspaper and in the attitudes of its readers. Even after Armistice, there was no peace, and the newspaper echoed the public sentiment that it was far off. Influenza became its own story, even as the readers of the *London Times* connected to the suffering they already experienced.

In a few short months, influenza changed the experience of war, particularly through the relationship between print media and the public. The flu began as another news story of war, with soldiers falling ill. It spread rapidly through the global population and moved beyond war reporting, even as it remained a part of war memory. Influenza's place in the *New York Times* and the *London Times* remained complicated as both a war story and other. That complex narrative of war, loss, and confusion only contributed to the melancholy felt by both societies. With no hope for medical intervention and no confidence in official word, the only options left during the influenza pandemic were intentional forgetfulness or to succumb to despair.

CHAPTER 3: LIVING WITH INFLUENZA

On October 12, *New York Times* readers received worrisome news. The paper warned, “Deliveries of practically all kinds of merchandise manufactured in New England, especially in Massachusetts, will be more or less delayed as a result of the stoppages of looms and machines growing out of the influenza plague.”¹ It was disheartening to hear as New England manufacturing was responsible for everything from clothing to sports equipment and much of the wartime industrial production.² The *London Times* reported that flu contributed to the Uppingham rugby team loss because “the team had not played together for more than a month.”³ As if it was not bad enough reading articles about influenza, now it was penetrating the rest of the daily features.

Influenza intruded on all parts of everyday life for the public. The evidence of this became apparent in the breadth of influenza reporting. It became sensational news, simply because flu featured in all aspects of the papers. The *New York Times* and the *London Times* attempted to inform the public about symptoms and warnings but instead invoked fear. The public received constant warnings to fear flu, to fear one another, and to fear the outside world because flu lurked everywhere. When they were not living in fear, advertisements attempted to convince the public to buy products that might keep them safe from the flu. Commodities became a measurable way to sell health, even as health itself became the most valuable commodity of all. Influenza appeared in all segments of the news: arts and entertainment, economic reports, and even sports articles began to mention influenza. Though the *New York Times* and the *London Times*

¹ “Deliveries Will Be Delayed,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1918, 17.

² John T. Crumbler and Robert E. Weir, *The Changing Landscape of Labor: American Workers and Workplaces* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 5.

³ “Uppingham Beaten at Richmond,” *London Times*, December 30, 12.

attempted to inform and reassure the public with their influenza commentary, the result left fear and sensationalism, simply by regular reporting.

The relentless reporting in both the *New York Times* and the *London Times* regarding the flu spoke of its pervasive impact on society. Newspapers acted as an information net, bringing wide populations together to experience events and issues simultaneously. The twentieth century saw the rise of the “first age of mass media” as newspaper circulations boomed, telegraphs made news instantly available to editors, creating a social integration never before seen.⁴ Newspapers and other mass media brought “a new kind of cohesion, able to connect scattered individuals in a shared national, city, and local experience” and this relationship contributed to “making hard lives more bearable.”⁵ For the readers of the *New York Times* or the *London Times*, the reciprocity between public and newspaper ensured a collective flu experience, even as there were individual stories of illness, deaths of loved ones, and suffering.

“Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases”: Warnings and Responses to Influenza

Both the *New York Times* and the *London Times* attempted to give their readers the best available advice on influenza. Warnings of symptoms to watch for, what to do if one took ill, authoritative responses, and daily updates printed in both newspapers. The commentary on flu became so common that both papers created an atmosphere of sensationalism and fear. The *New York Times* acted as a messenger for the official words of Royal S. Copeland and his Board of Health, as well as the statements released by national organizations. These repeated discussions of symptoms and prevention warnings

⁴ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2010), 52.

⁵ McQuail, 54.

attempted optimism, but instead seemed fatalistic and created the sense that health was a type of commodity everyone must do his or her part to protect. The London *Times* also created this attitude. Without the official and multi-level regulation occurring in the United States, the paper and the public found themselves angry that their valuable commodity was out of reach with no national move towards protection.

As influenza struck, The *New York Times* attempted to both inform and warn its readers. Copeland's constant interviews with the paper gave daily updates on case numbers, prevention tactics, and symptom awareness. Even in the face of pressure to focus on the war, the *New York Times* dedicated precious inches and pages of printed space to act as a messenger for the Public Health Service. Long, detailed flu articles often appeared in multiples on the same page. Copeland and the Board of Health's constant presence in the *New York Times* reinvented health as a new precious commodity; one society must protect at all costs. "It is the duty of everyone to be on his guard not only to avoid contracting the disease but also against spreading it," Copeland cautioned in an interview with the paper.⁶

Public health related articles and printed interviews with Copeland in the *New York Times* often focused on dire warnings and extensive descriptions of current cases. Copeland cautioned readers, "First there is sneezing or coughing, accompanied by headache, backache, or general aching of the bones... there is an immediate rise in temperature to 103 or 104 ... depression follows... I want to impress the public on the importance of going to bed and remaining quiet."⁷ Daily totals for each borough of New York printed in the paper, reminding readers that flu lurked everywhere. For instance, on

⁶ "31 New Cases in New York," *New York Times*, September 21, 1918, 7.

⁷ "Influenza Spreads 115 New Cases Here," *New York Times*, September 25, 1918, 24.

October 4, the *New York Times* stated, “For the 24 hours ended at 10 o’clock yesterday morning, 999 new cases of influenza have been reported.”⁸ The article continued to list deaths from influenza in each borough: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Richmond (renamed Staten Island in 1975).⁹ As there was no specific cure for the flu, Copeland and the Board of Health focused on containment and prevention of further outbreak.

Ensuring the flu did not spread may have been a lost cause, but officials fought continually against an ignorant public more focused on the war effort. Many articles seemed to instigate fear purposefully beneath veiled optimism. “We have the situation well in hand,” Copeland assured, “but the public must do their part.”¹⁰ Full of warnings, rules, regulations and increasing numbers of influenza, the public health reports in the *New York Times* communicated that personal health was in danger and it needed to protection.

As campaigns grew more desperate with the rising numbers of ill and dead, news articles became more demanding and dire. A direct quote from Copeland, printed October 2, warned ominously, “We are watching for spitters, already a number have been arrested.”¹¹ Anyone caught spitting in public faced; the *New York Times* printed, arrest, jail time, and a fine.¹² Further, Establishments who did not serve “properly cleansed glasses for the serving of drinks” faced fines and closure.¹³ Intentionally bold warnings

⁸ “New Gains in Grip Here,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1918, 24.

⁹ Ibid; For article on Staten Island name change, see Michael T. Kaufman, “Council Weighs Making ‘Staten Island’ Official,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1974.

¹⁰ “Drastic Steps Taken to Fight Influenza Here,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1918, 1, 6.

¹¹ “Tells of Vaccine to Stop Influenza,” *The New York Times*, October 2, 1918, 10.

¹² “Drastic Steps Taken to Fight Influenza Here.”

¹³ Ibid.

with the threat of arrest left people were afraid of actions that could spread disease. To those who “violate Department rules,” Copeland warned, “We will back them up.”¹⁴

The public health messages in the *New York Times* also promoted isolation. Subways and trains faced closure and businesses received orders to stagger operation hours.¹⁵ Theaters and churches did not close in New York City as they did in other U.S. Cities, but Copeland required that “services be shortened” and “at the beginning of each service an announcement be made of the danger that confronts the city, to sound a warning.”¹⁶ The public health newspaper warnings left the New York community disconnected and isolated. Repeatedly exposed to information on how to remain healthy and to stay away from one another, the city lost hope to the impression that society was not healthy. Influenza lurked everywhere, and no one was safe. For Copeland’s Board of Health and the *New York Times*, health was a commodity to be protected at all costs and the outside world viewed unsafe, including one’s neighbors.

With less official organization to combat the flu, the London *Times* reported symptoms and warnings very differently than the *New York Times*. There was no Royal S. Copeland figure to provide interviews and constant reiterations of flu indicators. Health became a commodity as it had in America, but one unreachable in the eyes of both the newspaper and the public. Flu not only stole the health of England, but it also revealed the non-existence of an official health body or organized public response. Nevertheless, the London *Times* worked to warn and inform its readers with as much information as possible. An early mention of symptoms in September stated that the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Revise Time Table in Influenza Fight,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 1, 8.

¹⁶ Ibid.

illness “with catarrh [inflammation of the mucous membrane], followed by intestinal disorders, and, in severe cases, develop into broncho-pneumonic complications.”¹⁷

Symptom descriptions and warnings took on an angry tone as both the public and the newspaper struggled with a lack of official direction. Where the *New York Times* with Copeland’s constant warnings created an atmosphere of isolating fear, the *London Times* and its readers became a community, albeit one that was both furious and depressed.

It was up to medical correspondents and unnamed local health officers to reveal much of the information available to readers on the dangers of influenza and its “intensely toxic character.”¹⁸ In other cases, letters to the editor from doctors and pathologists provided medical advice to readers on how to remain healthy.¹⁹ It was not until late October that the Local Government Board released an official statement on flu and its dangers, stating that closures and prevention should be left up to local Medical Officers of Health.²⁰ A more authoritative response came in December, in the form of an influenza film released by the Board and shown throughout London and other towns in England.²¹ Oddly enough, the only decisive regulations released up to that point by the Board focused on limiting cinema performances, as cinemas were considered by the upper classes to be immoral.²²

The *London Times* adamantly stated its position on the lack of a national public health system and voiced anger and concern in its articles that the public was left to defend and prevent flu itself. The most vocal article pronounced:

¹⁷ “Influenza and Dysentery,” *London Times*, September 18, 1918, 8.

¹⁸ “Influenza,” *London Times*, October 28, 1918, 6.

¹⁹ “Steam Heated Railway Carriages, a Letter to the Editor,” *London Times*, October 30, 1918, 7.

²⁰ Johnson, 126-7.

²¹ “Prevention of Influenza,” *London Times*, December 19, 1918, 5.

²² Johnson, 127.

The *Times* has frequently insisted upon the need for more thorough cleansing of our cities, the more efficient removal of refuse from houses and the more careful washing of streets... There can be little doubt that had these warnings been heeded we should have been in a better position today, for the influenza victims would not have been so liable to get additional infection... The real meaning of the present calamity is that steps must be taken to make somebody answerable for the nation's health.²³

Other articles, printed even after the Local Government Board's official release of information, continued to be critical of the national response. "This must be changed," one article stressed, "What is wanted is a really competent sanitary survey of the country."²⁴ Letters to the editor indicated agreement from the public. One reader commented, "in America, the health authorities are very vigilant and ready to proceed to measures of the most drastic kind if need be."²⁵ The vocalization of unrest and anger regarding a lack of official organizations to combat the flu was a unique manifestation in the London *Times*. It connected the newspaper with its public in a relationship of anger and fear at the lack of response to fight the epidemic.

Sanitation became a common theme in warnings and prevention suggestions within the London *Times*. Propositions included burning eucalyptus, fumigating the bed and clothes of any influenza victim in a house, and wiping telephones with disinfectant repeatedly.²⁶ The paper reported at the beginning of November that sanitized gauze masks might prevent infection, but lamented in December "had everyone (and particularly all travelers by train) worn a gauze mask when out of doors from the outset of the epidemic, this might have been aborted."²⁷

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Epidemic Waning," London *Times*, November 4, 1918, 5.

²⁵ "The Epidemic in America," London *Times*, October 30, 1918, 7.

²⁶ "Plans to Prevent Infection," London *Times*, October 30, 1918, 7.

²⁷ "The Prevention of Influenza," London *Times*, December 19, 1918, 5.

The London *Times* echoed the anger, fear, and hopelessness of the British public regarding the epidemic throughout its coverage of the disease. The hopelessness felt as a result of war became wrapped up in the influenza epidemic. “No warnings were issued, no watch was kept, no adequate steps were taken. It is too late now,” reported one article.²⁸ However, the London *Times* and its readers seemed to understand that influenza was somehow a separate cause of misery, apart from the horrors of war. Influenza was uniquely its own, “not among accepted war pestilences.”²⁹ The consistent reporting, particularly once the paper began its civilian coverage of the flu, left the relationship of the newspaper and its readers united in anger and sorrow.

The global presence of influenza and its widespread impact ensured the *New York Times* and the London *Times* acted as frontline distributors of any information that could prevent the disease. Daily updates, flu symptoms, and health warnings created a sensationalist story, but one that was very much real as it caused illness and death. The *New York Times* acted as a messenger for the public health officials such as Royal Copeland and the Board of Health, depending on formal interviews and press releases to inform its readers. However, by doing so, the paper caused further fear and isolation as people learned that their health was a commodity that the public health was selling, if people followed instructions. The idea that society remained full of disease created an environment of isolation as authorities suggested people fear the places they visited, the vehicles they traveled, and one another. The London *Times* lacked a definitive organization from which to draw information and depended on more on medical correspondents. Using what information was available, the paper promoted an aggressive

²⁸ “The Mystery of Influenza,” London *Times*, October 28, 1918, 7.

²⁹ Ibid.

campaign towards sanitation of the city. The anger at a lack of public health service became apparent in both the paper and its readers as people lost hope of remaining healthy.

“The Best and Surest Preventative”: Influenza in Advertising

With all the warning signs and suggestions to avoid disease printing in both papers, the flu became a selling point, often preventative if only a person bought a certain product. The concept of health as an obtainable product moved beyond the public health warnings and into capitalistic ventures. Influenza advertisements occupied strange space in the *New York Times* and the *London Times*. The advertisements brought further attention to the disease and current state of illness and attempted to capitalize on the situation. On the other hand, often, flu ads promoted products that helped treat or prevent the flu and thus welcomed. Rarely were products advertised visibly exploitative, but they existed. The presence of advertisements in the papers gave further evidence that influenza bombarded the public. The flu was so widespread and inescapable that it became a selling point.

While most ads in the *New York Times* attempted to portray health as a commodity, contingent on product purchase, a few did “play on alarmist fears.”³⁰ The question of ethics involved in marketing during a widespread pandemic existed, but advertisements seemed to flourish during the height of the epidemic. In some cases, advertisements reassured – the flu was out there yes, but it was containable and controllable. Many of these ads used influenza to promote products that were not even

³⁰ Evan Sones, “Roanoke Flu Ad Exhibit,” *Virginia Tech*, December 2013.

medicines or health products. Other ads, particularly for those selling remedies and preventatives, manipulated fearful emotions to encourage product sales.

Some products and advertisements proposed that personal health came from purchases, though products offered in advertisements did not necessarily connect to the disease. An ad for an Ampico Radio suggested families spend time at home “while this storm rages outside” because an Ampico allowed listeners to “hear the finest concert right at home.”³¹ The family in the ad looked obviously healthy, showing no signs of sickness. One attempt to contain the pandemic came in through the closure of gathering halls, theaters, and meeting places.³² The Ampico ad brushed aside these fearful shutdowns by suggesting consumers stay home with their family and listen to the radio, instead of out in public where influenza raged.

Window ventilators purchased from Theodore Gerdes promised prevention from influenza through “healthful, unheated fresh air.”³³ “One or Two glasses of hot lemonade” and “adequate exercise,” minimized the chance of influenza, an ad from the

The AMPICO

The Concert at Home Tonight

“Thank you for thinking of us, but we are so comfortable here while this storm rages outside that you couldn’t persuade us to leave home.”

“Beside, there is no need of taking the long trip to town to hear the concert. Godowsky is playing for us right now through our Ampico! Playing as perfectly as he will play in Carnegie tonight.”

“Come up and join us. You’ll hear not only one artist but a score—and what a programme! Ornsien, Carreno, Goodson, Basini—the greatest of the great.”

“Good, you’re coming. We’ll have the finest concert right here at home. Bring the young people with you and we’ll have some dancing afterward. Our Ampico never tires, nor do we tire of the Ampico. We’ll expect you within half an hour. Good-bye.”

IN your own home, you may have just such an evening as this. Music for you, your family and your friends, such as it would cost thousands of dollars to duplicate on the concert stage. Whenever, and as often as you wish, the Ampico will reproduce the playing of the great artists. To your home life the Ampico adds the perfecting touch of exquisite music.

The AMPICO in the KNABE
Uprights \$1400 and \$1500 Grands \$2300

Convenient Monthly Terms may be arranged.
Pianos and Player Pianos taken in exchange.

Save and Serve—Invest in Liberty Bonds

Knabe Warerooms
Fifth Avenue at Thirty-ninth St.

Figure 6: Ampico Radio Ad, *New York Times*, October 5, 1918.

³¹ “The Ampico in the Knabe,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1918, 3.

³² Alexandra Stern, Martin S. Cetron, and Howard Markel, “Closing the Schools: Lessons from the 1918-19 U.S. Influenza Pandemic,” *Health Affairs* 28, no. 6 (2009): 1066-70.

³³ “Gerdes Ventilators,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 21.

California Fruit Growers Exchange suggested.³⁴ While these products did encourage health, staying away from potentially infected crowds, fresh air, vitamin C, and exercise, they were not central to flu prevention. As Tom Ewing, a professor at Virginia Tech noted in “An Epidemiology of Information,” advertisements not only sold products, they helped shape the flow of information regarding the pandemic.³⁵ Business owners manipulated the situation to make a profit with their ads. However, they also spread awareness of the outbreak and echoed Copeland’s warnings and notices from the Board of Health.

Though arguably callous, some companies intentionally capitalized on the threat of influenza. These product advertisements often emulated public health print campaigns by instigating fear. Fear of disease engaged consumers in purchasing all sorts of remedies and preventatives. Scott’s Emulsion ran several ads throughout October warning readers, “Thwart the Germ!” because “the

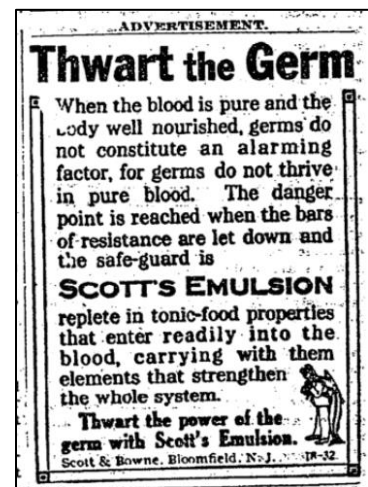


Figure 7: Scott's Emulsion Ad, *New York Times*, October 15, 1918.

danger point is reached when the bars of resistance are let down and the safeguard is Scott’s Emulsion.”³⁶ Rather than the more positive messages of other advertisements, these encouraged the epidemic terror, often directly quoting or linking products to Public Health campaign control measures. “During the epidemic, Gimbels are ready to do their bit toward Dr. Copeland’s call for help,” the Gimbel Brothers company, selling window ventilators, stated.³⁷ Copeland’s repeated urgings to avoid crowds echoed in one ad,

³⁴ “California Fruit Growers Exchange,” *New York Times*, October 13, 83.

³⁵ Tom Ewing, “Better than a Cure for Influenza,” *The Roanoke Times*, November 2013.

³⁶ “Scott’s Emulsion,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1918, 2.

³⁷ “Gimbel Brothers,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1918, 7.

“Protect yourself against Spanish influenza in crowds – put a Cin-form lozenge in your mouth.”³⁸ The often reported warning to sneeze and cough into handkerchiefs to avoid spreading disease seemed simple if one bought Rogers Peet handkerchiefs.³⁹ This approach intentionally tied the product to the warnings and prevention methods of Copeland and the Board of Health.

Other product advertisements went beyond association and casual linkage to Copeland and directly stated their products would protect and prevent purchasers from flu. These ads borrowed words directly from public health campaigns or Copeland. A Kolynos Dental Cream ad specified, “The Surgeon General of the Army recently issued twelve rules to the public to safeguard against the spread of respiratory diseases. The

MEASURES OF PRECAUTION AGAINST INFLUENZA

When you have Influenza, the first thing to do is to go to bed and call a doctor.

In order not to contract it, there are certain common-sense precautions which you owe to yourself and your family.

Health Board Instructions on Influenza, when boiled down, mean:

Keep dry!
Keep warm!
Keep clean — inside and out!

In other words, put yourself into the best condition to repel the attacks of air-borne germs.

Fully ninety per cent. of infection is taken into the system through the mouth and nose. *These are the first breeding places of most germs.* It is of the greatest importance that micro-organisms be destroyed or made innocuous at the Port of Entry. *Keeping the teeth clean alone does not do it.* The whole mouth, the throat and the nasal passages should receive proper treatment.

Of all the things readily available and easily applied, Kolynos performs these offices best. The formula of Kolynos Dental Cream contains the following:

<i>Oil of Eucalyptus</i>	<i>Benzoic Acid</i>	<i>Alcohol</i>
<i>Oil of Peppermint</i>	<i>Saccharine</i>	<i>Chalk</i>
<i>Thymol</i>	<i>Glycerine</i>	<i>Soap</i>

It was the open publication of the Kolynos formula which from the first gained the confidence of dentists and physicians, and led them to so largely recommend it.

Protective Measures:

Use Kolynos Dental Cream, during times of epidemic, *at least three times daily.* Apply with a dry brush, and brush not only the teeth, but reach *every part of the mouth*, including the tongue.

Gargle the throat with the foam produced by this brushing.

In this way you will not omit any part of the oral cavity.

At the first sign of a cold, place a small amount of the dental cream—about half the size of a pea—in the entrance of each nostril, when retiring, and several times during the day.

Additional Precautions:

If your throat is dry or inflamed, or if you have been exposed to infection, gargle with a twenty-five per cent. solution of Kolynos Liquid, which has the same properties as Kolynos Dental Cream, but in a higher degree.

If you are obliged to go where there is infection, place a pellet of cotton, wet with Kolynos Liquid, *full strength*, in each nostril.

This *filters the air you breathe* and, at the same time, carries into the nasal passages, bronchial tubes and lungs the highly volatile ingredients, which have a distinct germicidal action.

Those exposed to infection should, also, *frequently spray their mouths and throats* with Kolynos Liquid. A generally acceptable strength for this spraying is equal parts of Kolynos Liquid and water.

Kolynos preparations are in no sense recommended as a cure for Influenza, but should be looked on solely as common-sense and scientific pre-cautionary agents.

The Kolynos Company
New Haven, Conn.
U. S. A.

Figure 8 Kolynos Ad, *New York Times*, October 23, 1918.

³⁸ “Cin-u-form Lozenges,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1918, 3.

³⁹ “Rogers Peet Company,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1918, 12.

fourth of these rules is as follows: Remember the three C's – A Clean Mouth, Clean Skin, and Clean Clothes.”⁴⁰

The Kolynos Company specifically marketed sanitation throughout several different ads, exactly as Copeland and national organizations, like the United States Public Health Service, suggested. Another Kolynos advertisement suggested, “The Health Board instructions on Influenza when boiled down mean Keep Dry! Keep Warm! Keep Clean!”⁴¹ The same ad also admitted, “Kolynos preparations are in no sense recommended as a cure for influenza, but should be looked on as common sense.” The Kolynos Company directly borrowed prevention methods from Copeland’s interviews in the *New York Times* and re-released them as selling points for their product.

If one had a radio, a window ventilator, and several remedies, surely, they would remain healthy. While the Board of Health and Copeland tended to incite fear and isolation or provide false security to the readers of the *New York Times*, advertisements were much more positive overall. Families could find the hope in their dire situations when they thought that avoiding flu was as simple as drinking hot lemonade. Some advertisements manipulated consumer fear, beyond what the Public Health campaigns counseled. Usually, to sell medicines, remedies, or preventatives, these advertisements contributed to the chaos of information Americans faced. Advertisements capitalizing on influenza in the *London Times* occurred earlier than in New York, but with less frequency.⁴² Many ad campaigns focused on protection, health improvement, and

⁴⁰ “The Kolynos Company,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1918, 3.

⁴¹ “The Kolynos Company,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1918, 7.

⁴² The first flu advertisement in the *London Times* occurred on September 11, 1918 compared to September 27, 1918 for the *New York Times*. There were only 30 *London Times* flu ads compared to 58 flu ads in the *New York Times*. See Chapter 1 for more detail.

prevention printed over multiple days. Products advertised carried names such as “Sanitas,” “Bacterol,” or “Jeyes Sanitary Compound.”⁴³ The call for sanitation echoed in other pages of the paper found a stronghold in the products using influenza as a selling point. Like the advertisements of the *New York Times*, there was a shift towards viewing health as a commodity, but the products remained directly attached to the flu. There was no nebulous connection between a preventative medicine and disease. The advertisements in the London *Times* capitalized upon fear of losing health to sell their products.

All but two ads referencing flu throughout the entire second wave of influenza promoted preventative medicines. The first non-preventative or sanitary product advertisement to run in the newspaper belonged to the theater play “Roxana.” The ad announced the return of Doris Keane, “having recovered from a severe attack of influenza” and gave show times for the play.⁴⁴ In this case, the message remained uplifting. The actress did suffer influenza but overcame the disease, and the play continued. The ad was notable, not only for its difference as a theater ad but also that it gave no sense of fear. The underlying message of the ad, influenza could be beaten, stood apart from other advertisements that capitalized on the danger of the disease.

The second advertisement came from the Serbian Relief Fund. The ad played on the “terrible ravages” of influenza, the lack of medication or food, and the “unhappy people” in Belgrade to entice charitable donations.⁴⁵ The Serbian Relief Fund, a charity

⁴³ “Sanitas,” London *Times*, October 21, 1918, 6; “Bacterol,” London *Times*, October 16, 1918, 12; “Jeyes Sanitary Compound,” London *Times*, November 1, 1918, 2.

⁴⁴ “Doris Keane,” London *Times*, November 1, 1918, 6.

⁴⁵ “Serbian Relief Fund,” London *Times*, November 23, 1918, 4.

based in London, sent funds, nurses, teachers, and caregivers to Belgrade during the war.⁴⁶ Painting a grim picture of conditions in Belgrade, the ad woefully stated, “those of us who are still in health can do nothing for the patients who are languishing in cold, bare rooms without fuel or sufficient clothing.”⁴⁷ The image of Belgrade as a “graveyard” played into a larger propaganda campaign utilized by

the Relief Fund throughout the war.⁴⁸ The ad intentionally used influenza’s impact to encourage sympathy and charitable donations.

Most advertisements in the London *Times* did not appeal to a reader’s sympathy, but their anxiety regarding the flu and in some cases, their weariness of the war. An advertisement for Salutaris, “the safe drinking water,” warned, “Influenza has spread through the land like a fire through straw. Its prevalence indicates that the long strain of the War has left us more than usually susceptible to epidemics.”⁴⁹ The ad suggested that drinking any water other than Salutaris, guaranteed to contain no influenza, could be hazardous to one’s health. Also, it was the fault of the war that everyone was falling sick. Blame on the war appeared indirectly in other ads. Labor shortages suggested one ad for

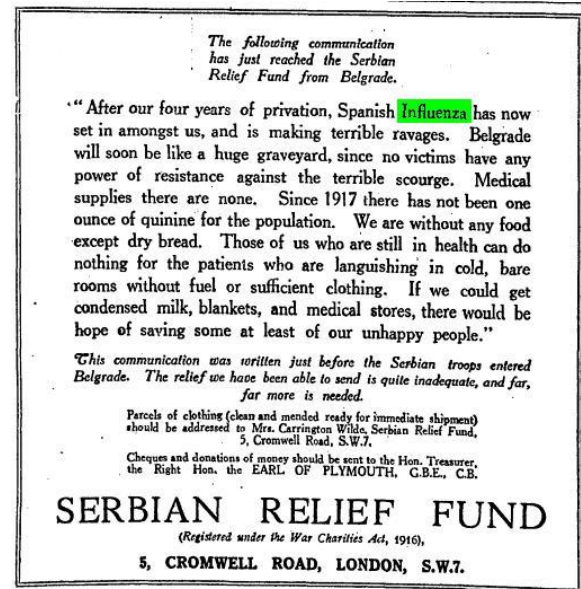


Figure 9: Serbian Relief Fund Ad, London *Times*, November 23, 1918.

⁴⁶ Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia’s Great War: 1914-1918* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007), xv.

⁴⁷ “Serbian Relief Fund.”

⁴⁸ Mitrović, xv.

⁴⁹ “Salutaris,” London *Times*, December 27, 1918, 10.

Bacterol, already burdened business owners and they should invest in the aerial spray to keep factory staff or other employees free from influenza infections.⁵⁰

Anxieties about remaining free of influenza and the power to purchase one's health led to several advertising campaigns between competitive products. Sanitas, "the best and surest preventative" offered aerial spray like Bacterol.⁵¹ A similar product, Jeyes' Sanitary Compound promised to "guard against influenza" as it was the "ideal disinfectant."⁵² Oxo beef extract competed with Bovril. Multiple businesses competed for advertising space while attempting to market comparable products aimed at prevention and sanitation. Competitive marketing between businesses suggested a high demand for these commodities. Their repeated presence in the paper suggested the market for preventatives and medicines, those sanitizing the body or home were popular.

One strategy advertisements utilized in the *London Times* to sell influenza-related products occurred in the appearance of expert testimonials. "Salutaris is the wholesomest water we have," the ad quoted one medical officer as saying.⁵³ Oxo advertised "a communication received from a Doctor" which suggested two or three cups of the liquid beef a day to fortify the body against the flu.⁵⁴ Another ad for Formamint, the first to reference influenza, suggested that a nurse "and the doctor habitually take Formamint themselves because they know it is the easiest, safest method."⁵⁵ Later Formamint ads

⁵⁰ "Bacterol," *London Times*, October 16, 1918, PAGE.

⁵¹ "Sanitas," *London Times*, October 21, 1918, 21.

⁵² "Jeyes' Sanitary Compound," *London Times*, November 16, 1918, 10.

⁵³ "Salutaris," *London Times*, December 20, 1918, 10.

⁵⁴ "Oxo," *London Times*, October 31, 1918, 2.

⁵⁵ "Formamint," *London Times*, September 11, 1918, 4.

took this tactic a step further and printed testimonials from members of the English Peerage in the form of celebrity endorsement.⁵⁶ The endorsements came from peers of some note, including the Lady John Joicey-Cecil, a Marchioness, the second rank of the peerage.⁵⁷ These testimonials added authenticity to influenza products. If doctors and nurses suggested them and the upper classes endorsed them, surely the general public could avoid influenza by using them. The testimonials allowed skeptic readers of the *London Times* to rationalize a purchase and buy their health.

The most persistent influenza advertising campaign in the *London Times* capitalized on flu, the war, and shortages to incite a frenzy for its product. Bovril, a liquid beef extract, ran a series of six ads in the newspaper using an interesting marketing strategy. The first ad apologized for a shortage of the product “in view of the immense value of Bovril during and influenza epidemic.”⁵⁸ Bovril ads specifically asked consumers to “refrain from buying Bovril if you have a stock in the house” as a “simple way of helping others during the present influenza epidemic.”⁵⁹ Labor shortages

Fight the 'Flu with FORMAMINT

THE GERM KILLING
THROAT TABLET

Suck a few Formamints every day, and you will be safe from Spanish Influenza and other epidemics.

“I feel safe from infection of any kind when I have Formamint at hand,” writes Lady Manns, “and I have not had any throat trouble since I first began to use the tablets.”

And Lady John Joicey-Cecil writes that she “has used Formamint for many years, and is at present using it for an influenza epidemic in her household.”

Remember, too, that Formamint has curative as well as preventive powers. Thus, Mr. Matheson Lang writes: “My doctors ordered me Formamint during an attack of influenza and it gave me great relief and healed the lacerated throat wonderfully.”

Again, Lady Firbank writes that “Formamint tablets have completely cured her throat, which owing to influenza has been left weak and painful.” One of the first specialists in London recommended Formamint to her.

Buy a bottle of Formamint at your Chemist's to day (price 2/6), but be sure you get the genuine kind, for, as *The Pharmaceutical Journal* says: “No tablets can claim to be equal or similar to Formamint in composition.” So look for our name on the label.

GENATOSAN, LTD.
(British Purchasers of Santogen Co.)
Chairman: The Viscountess Rhinella.
12, CHENIES ST., LONDON, W.C.1.

Figure 10: Formamint Ad, *London Times*, October 16, 1918.

⁵⁶ “Formamint,” *London Times*, October 16, 1918, 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid; Charles Kidd and David Williamson, *Debrett's Peerage and Baronetage* (London: Debrett's Ltd., 2015), 596.

⁵⁸ “Bovril,” *London Times*, November 29, 1918, 6.

⁵⁹ “Bovril,” *London Times*, December 3, 1918, 6.

throughout Britain ensured that household items, such as glass containers were scarce.⁶⁰ Bringing attention to the shortages as well as the “body-building power” of Bovril made sure that readers of the newspaper ads would immediately purchase the product before there was none available. Bovril’s company became “pioneers in the dark art of marketing.”⁶¹ Fast acting campaigning using war shortages and the epidemic played upon consumer fear to convincingly sell health and even more jars of Bovril.

Capitalizing on the pandemic occurred both in America and Britain.

Influenza advertisements promoted health, sanitation, radios, lemonade, and a variety

of other products to try and convince the public to purchase health in the face of overwhelming disease. The *New York Times* ran ads that often echoed or directly quoted from the public health messages or connected products with nebulous connections to the disease. Advertisements in the *London Times* focused on sanitation and prevention

UNSELFISHNESS

There is a simple way of helping others during the present influenza epidemic.

It is to refrain from buying Bovril if you have a stock in the house which will carry you on even for a month.

In this way you will leave the available Bovril in the shops for those who have illness at home.

Bovril Ltd. recognising that those who are deprived of the body-building power of Bovril may more easily fall victims to the epidemic are doing their utmost to increase the supply.

But the lack of bottles seriously hampers their efforts, and it is hoped that men will soon be released for the bottle factories so that there may be, once again, Bovril for all.

Figure 11: Bovril Ad, *London Times*, November 29, 1918.

⁶⁰ Peter Warr, *Sheffield's Great War and Beyond: 1916-1918* (London: Pen and Sword Books Ltd., 2015), 161.

⁶¹ Lesley Steinitz, “Making Muscular Machines with Nitrogenous Nutrition: Bovril, Plasmon, and Cadbury’s Cocoa” (presentation, Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, Oxford, July 6, 2013).

almost exclusively. The influenza ads played on the public fear of illness while also assuring that health was obtainable, with purchase.

“Epidemic May Prevent Bout”: Flu in Entertainment, Sports, And Business Articles

Influenza made its way into sections of the *New York Times* and the London *Times* that showcased its widespread presences in daily life better than any other area of the paper. Articles discussing sports, entertainment, the arts, and economics divulged just how quickly the disease became entrenched across society. These articles hinted at a larger social narrative, even when flu only received a casual mention single sentences. In the *New York Times*, the flu caused theater and sports events to cancel or postpone. In the London *Times*, economic articles noted the disease’s part in shortages from colonial holdings. Flu permeated the media to the point of casual references, showcasing just how widespread and impactful the pandemic was beyond public health dangers or the use of advertisements.

Influenza disrupted daily life in New York, in ways many never anticipated. Glimpses of these interruptions appeared in the *New York Times* in articles regarding entertainment and sports. Whether it was the cancellation of annual orchestra music festivals or the postponement of boxing matches featuring future heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey, influenza caused uncertainty and chaos within recreational aspects of public life.⁶² Entertainment events, a means of retaining a semblance of normalcy during wartime, faced cancellation or closure, further alienating people from one another and creating a casual environment where influenza cases were the norm.

⁶² “With the Orchestras,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1918, 91; “Influenza Epidemic May Prevent Bout,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 31.

In the *New York Times* coverage of theater, influenza caused significant upheaval. Worries over theater closures caused profit uncertainties and resulted in several productions cancellations because theater houses had become “steadily poorer since the epidemic.”⁶³ While some theaters canceled entire productions, others delayed or canceled showings, trying to alleviate profit loss.⁶⁴ Flu also caused many concert and theater appearances to change. One article reported that Elias Breeskin, a violinist, would be taking a number assigned to another soloist substitute for the original pianist, both who fell ill with influenza.⁶⁵ The logistical nightmare of finding a second substitute after both the original player and fill-in both had to cancel surely caused organizers trouble. New York City hosted more than 45 “first class” theater houses alone, and nightly attendance required a minimum of “twenty-five to thirty thousand persons” to maintain profit margins.⁶⁶ Influenza not only caused a significant reduction in entertainment options for the public but also caused economic hardship for those in the theater industry.

Sports events also fell victim to influenza, according to the *New York Times*. Like the theaters, football, boxing, and other sports faced cancellations due to the epidemic. The Marietta football team traveled to a game only to return home due to “a most rigid quarantine, preventing any sort of assembly” in West Virginia.⁶⁷ Football season suffered greatly, according to the paper, because of flu:

Although football season has faced enough obstacles this season to discourage almost any form of athletic recreation, there is so much enthusiasm for the gridiron game at the army camps, naval stations, and student army posts that the

⁶³ “What News on the Rialto,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1918, 42.

⁶⁴ “Opera Novelties from Chicago,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 77.

⁶⁵ “Breeskin Plays for Humanitarians,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1918, 10.

⁶⁶ “What News on the Rialto.”

⁶⁷ “Marietta Has Useless Trip,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1918, 30.

sport refuses to be subdued, in spite of influenza and other handicaps. Never in the history of the sport has the game faced such a crisis.⁶⁸

Cancellations caused an economic issue, like in the theater industry, but sports provided a relief from war. The *New York Times*' article not only brought attention to the impact of flu on football but showed how much the loss of the game mattered to the public and servicemen.

Though not nearly to the extent of the *New York Times*, there were instances of arts and entertainment articles that mentioned influenza in the *London Times*. In sports, rugby teams, such as the one at Uppingham, lost games due to players being unable to practice after the flu spread.⁶⁹ Influenza made an appearance in several articles discussing concerts. The first announced the lack of artists and crowd at the King's Fund Concert owing to flu.⁷⁰ Another article giving a concert review revealed that the opera singer, Miss Olga Haley, sang beautifully, despite just recovering from influenza.⁷¹ Influenza permeated all aspects of life, from the war, the news, and the entertainment people attempted to enjoy. It lurked even within operas.

Life became so saturated with talk of influenza in the *London Times* that casual references occurred. One theater review suggested that shorter concerts were preferable to longer productions in the afternoon. The reviewer admonished, "It is not only the lady dying for her tea who dislikes long concerts in the afternoon... [it is] the Pilgrim who listens with heart and head to some movement which is as restoring to his soul as is the

⁶⁸ "Leading Elevens Ready for Action," *New York Times*, October 19, 1918, 16.

⁶⁹ "Uppingham Beaten at Richmond."

⁷⁰ "The King's Concert," *London Times*, November 9, 1918, 3.

⁷¹ "Miss Olga Haley's Songs," *London Times*, December 11, 1918, 16.

tonic to an influenza patient's body, he rebels, also, at your long programs."⁷² Influenza was so common, even in the press, that it acted as a comparison with other activities not even related to health, medicine, or disease.

The London *Times* more commonly showed the international effect of influenza through its articles discussing economics. Shortages in raw material imports appeared in the paper as flu took hold in British colonies. As early as the first of October, the London *Times* reported an outbreak of influenza in both European and African workers in the Rand Goldfields.⁷³ Reports of the Cam and Motor Goldfield stated influenza was "incapacitating all natives and about 75 percent of European employees within one week."⁷⁴ In the Assam mines of India, coal output was dangerously low in September and October due to a "most virulent strain of influenza."⁷⁵ Copper mining in South Africa faced "complete stoppage of works for nearly five weeks."⁷⁶ Diamonds at the De Beers Mines in Africa faced shortages caused by influenza as well. An article reported that "the great majority of the natives in the compounds had left for their homes in the native territories, and the future of the working program of the company largely depended on such labor."⁷⁷

These reports in the London *Times* briefly connected influenza to the larger world and spoke a darker story. Mentions of influenza in mining reports acted as an indicator to a global pandemic. The imperial presence of Britain in southern Africa already carried a history of conflict and unrest with the discovery of resources such as gold and diamonds.

⁷² "Shorter Concerts," London *Times*, December 21, 1918, 11.

⁷³ "City Notes," London *Times*, October 1, 1918, 12.

⁷⁴ "Mining Outputs," London *Times*, November 2, 1918, 11.

⁷⁵ "Assam Railways and Trading Company (Limited)," London *Times*, October 24, 1918, 12.

⁷⁶ "Tanganyika Concessions," London *Times*, December 4, 1918, 16.

⁷⁷ "The De Beers Meeting," London *Times*, December 20, 1918, 16.

Colonial realities and exploitation ensured that Africans living in the colonies would face immense devastation as influenza struck. Laborers lived in close quarter compounds, under terrible conditions, and suffered malnourishment.⁷⁸ Influenza wiped out a significant part of the population. The death rate numbered 44 people per 1,000 (compared to England's 6 per 1,000).⁷⁹ Attempting to flee the epidemic, laborers fled the compounds and took the flu with them. India faced catastrophic death totals, some of the highest globally, with numbers of influenza dead reaching as high as 30 million people.⁸⁰ Often with one sentence, the mining reports and tonnage reports in the London *Times* hinted at horrific conditions in parts of the British colonies, often only referenced as "labor shortages."

Articles in the entertainment and sports sections of the *New York Times* and the business sections of the London *Times* created a link between influenza and daily life. The brief mentions of influenza as the reason behind cancellations or shortages told the public more than a lost show time. It indicated the prevalence of influenza in society. The pandemic halted social engagements, made it difficult to manage economic interests, and further defined the disease as inescapable. These casual references caused more anxiety, even though they were not the focus of the news item, simply by being present.

"Safeguard Your Household Against Influenza"

Influenza was everywhere in the *New York Times* and the London *Times*. It was in the warnings to watch for particular symptoms. It was in the isolation people felt as they read suggestions to avoid crowds, places of entertainment, and public transportation. It

⁷⁸ William Storey Keller, "Southern Africa," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, eds. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson. October 8, 2014, http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/southern_africa.

⁷⁹ Jonson, 78-80.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

was in the anger felt by paper and public alike at the lack of sanitation and ability to stop people from becoming sick. Flu was a selling point in the quest for people to purchase health through product advertising. Influenza lurked behind cancellations for popular plays and sports matches. It acted as a dark indicator of social exploitation and economic shortages. It was truly inescapable, not just in the press, but in daily life.

The newspapers attempted to warn their readers and provide advice on how to survive the pandemic. The *New York Times* relied on interviews with public health officials like Copeland, while the *London Times* became visibly frustrated by the lack of official response. In both papers, health became a commodity. To avoid disease or death, suddenly people required certain actions, avoid certain places, or the purchase of products to protect their health. Recreational activities, such as seeing a concert or attending a sporting event became dangerous and difficult. Shortages created economic difficulty, both at the large national scale and in the home. The constant reporting, a bombardment of influenza related discussion, only served to sensationalize the outbreaks and incite fear.

CONCLUSION

As quickly as it appeared, influenza died away. In only four months, the second wave of influenza attacked the globe in the most virulent and deadly strain ever recorded. Life expectancy dropped ten to twelve years around the world.¹ Entire families fell victim to the flu, and the survivors, already suffering from the impacts of war, tried to move on. Influenza caused a true global pandemic, leaving only one continent on the globe, Antarctica, free of disease.² The unprecedented scale of the outbreak was shocking. Even the infamous Black Death did not reach as far as influenza in those few months. The flu returned in a third wave within the first few months of 1919, but it was not as deadly as the experience that had preceded it.³ With the last wave of disease passed, history forgot the most deadly viral pandemic of all time.

Arno Karlen commented, “It is astonishing that we did not all grow up with tales of the great flu disaster. It is equally amazing that... the experience left only a light mark on history.”⁴ Understanding the impacts of the influenza pandemic are vital to the human experience. Flu never succumbed to public health intervention, and no medicine cures ever defeated it. Crosby noted, when discussing his work on the pandemic, “I know how to not get AIDs. I don’t know how to not get the flu.”⁵ After the outbreak, flu returned to its place as a common malady, more annoying than deadly. However, in every year since 1918, flu kills hundreds of thousands of people worldwide each year.⁶

¹ Kolata, 8.

² Taubenberger and Morens, 19.

³ Crosby, 60-61.

⁴ Arno Karlen, *Men and Microbes* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995), 145.

⁵ Kolata, 6.

⁶ “Influenza (Seasonal),” *Worldwide Health Organization*, March 2014, accessed April 24, 2016, www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs221/en.

The experiences of the flu echoed in the newspapers during the pandemic. The *New York Times* and the *London Times* gave extensive coverage to the flu to their readers, creating a collective experience recorded in print. For the last four months of 1918, articles in the two papers recorded influenza in a variety of methods, from front page news to casual references. The daily coverage created a pervasive anxiety and fear. Flu lurked everywhere, and the world was helpless to stop it. The newspapers informed and warned the public, but with the sheer amount of influenza in the press, they also contributed to pandemic fears. By trying to reassure the public that everything would turn out well, in the end, the *New York Times* and the *London Times* only added to the hopelessness and depression influenza caused. The relationship between the media and the public within the larger narrative of the pandemic was one of collective panic.

The *New York Times* began widespread coverage in mid-September, reaching near frenzied levels of reporting in October. However, with the declaration of Armistice, the *New York Times* stopped discussing flu quickly. During the outbreak, the paper became a messenger for the New York Board of Health and the United States Public Health Service as both organizations attempted to prevent the flu and contain its spread. The *London Times* began with fewer mentions of influenza initially, but increased over time, printing more about the flu than the *New York Times*. The *London Times* focused on the civilian experience, as military news was likely to be heavily censored, but engaged with its readers in a collective anger at the lack of official public health.

The news coverage of the pandemic began as mentions of influenza in outsiders and increased in number of articles and mentions until it became a daily occurrence to read about illness case numbers, deaths, symptoms, and warnings for disease prevention.

With more than 700 articles and nearly 100 advertisements directly mentioning influenza between the two papers, there was simply no way to avoid influenza, unless one ignored all the newspapers. The *New York Times* and *London Times* did try to reassure readers, but that optimism seemed hollow when placed on the same pages discussing hundreds or thousands of influenza cases.

Early on, the *New York Times* attempted to set the oncoming epidemic outside of civilian experience and focused its reporting in the army camp outbreaks. The paper kept printing the opinions of public health officials that influenza would never overtake New York City. Once that proved laughably untrue, the paper became less optimistic and starker in its reporting. In the *London Times*, early reporting focused on outbreaks occurring outside of Britain minimized information on the epidemic within England, probably due to censorship laws. As influenza grew more widespread, the *London Times* focused on the civilian experience of the disease or outbreaks in other parts of the world.

The difficulty in reporting influenza for the *New York Times* and the *London Times* rested in the pandemic's place within social narratives. On the one hand, influenza was just another experience of the war – it caused pain, suffering, depression, and was simply one thing among hundreds of others trying to kill people. Articles discussing war news included influenza cases. The terrible toll of influenza in America brought home the horrors of war loss and pain, whereas before there was a layer of separation present due to the geographical distance. On the other hand, influenza was its own story. Influenza impacted people in ways that were entirely separate from the war. It became its own reportable news entity, its own story, and at the height of the outbreak, took precedence over war news. The declaration of Armistice and the imminent end to the war shifted influenza news back into

a war narrative for the *New York Times* and allowed people to forget the disease purposely. For the *London Times*, influenza manifested post-war despondency after four long, debilitating years of combat.

Apart from its place within the larger narrative of the First World War, influenza created a persistent environment of fear and anxiety for readers of the *New York Times* and the *London Times*. By attempting to inform readers of the latest news on the disease, the papers sensationalized the pandemic. With daily reports, countless obituaries, and advertisements selling health, influenza seemed uncontrollable, deadly, and lurked in all aspects of everyday life. The *New York Times* parroted public health campaigns with a barrage of warnings about symptoms and preventative measures. The *London Times* engaged medical correspondents and doctors in discussing the disease and methods of surviving it. Advertisements in both papers sold health, whether through preventative medicines or random objects like lemons. Flu even made appearances in articles discussing arts, entertainment, sports, or business sections which gave readers subtle indications of how deeply entrenched influenza was within society.

The 1918 flu pandemic created a strange relationship between newspaper and reader in both the *New York Times* and the *London Times*. There were panic and fear combined with ideas of health and sanitation, all wrapped up in a larger narrative of war and suffering. However, as soon as the disease passed, society forgot all about its pandemic induced hysteria. Influenza retreated, the *New York Times* and the *London Times* stopped its influenza coverage, and the pandemic became lost in the notoriety of the War. As Crosby stated, “It has never inspired awe... not among the citizens of any particular land

... this inaptitude for wonder and fear cannot be attributed to a lack of information.”⁷ The marks of influenza remained in public health initiatives: The United States Public Health Service’s newfound powers and budgets and the creation of a British Ministry of Health. For the rest of society, influenza became something to worry over a few months out of the year. However, the fear that was so pervasive in both newspapers and the public during 1918 never left. It remained in yearly warnings to get flu vaccinations or in news articles on newly discovered strains of the disease. An underlying dread towards sickness and disease remained a subconscious memory of the 1918 pandemic.

⁷ Crosby, 311.

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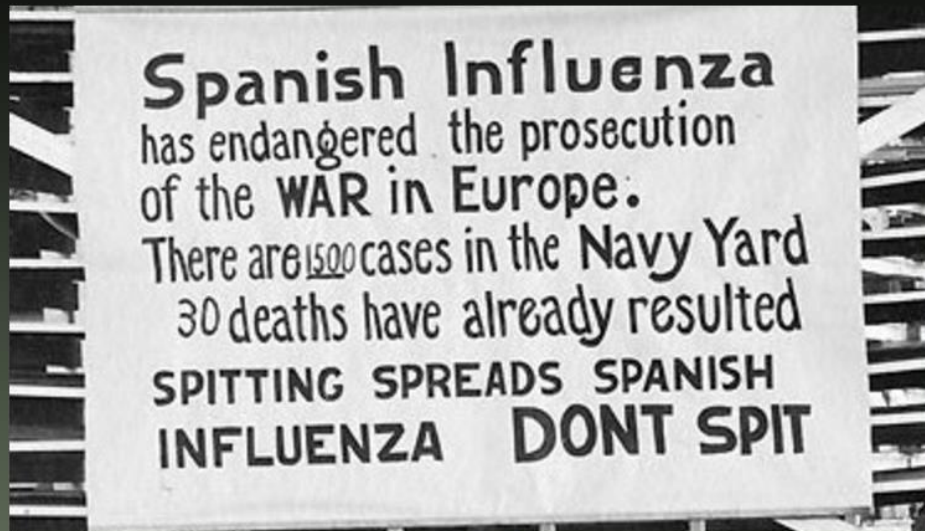
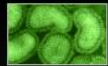
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APPENDIX

As a part of my thesis coursework, I created a digital history project website:

www.historygoesviral.com

The mission statement of this digital history project is to act as both public history and educational tool for non-academics interested in the social impacts of disease, particularly the influenza pandemic of 1918, on societies. Using various methods of digital analysis, History Goes Viral attempts to understand disease and its historical impact on society. The project aims to present rigorous academic scholarship in language that is approachable for students to increase critical analysis skills and encourage appreciation of historical discourse. Whenever possible, programs used to create digital presentations were selected due to ease of access, so that students could replicate these projects in other areas of history coursework. For each presentation, discussion questions are attached for educators to use in the classroom or to encourage viewers to engage more deeply in historical analysis. Screenshot samples from the website are provided below.



WELCOME



HISTORY GOES VIRAL

Influenza is a common malady, or is it? In 1918, influenza changed the daily lives of millions around the world. The flu is one disease among many. Disease follows humanity throughout history. It has shaped our science, our medicine, and our societies. We fear outbreaks. We fear illness. We always have.

History Goes Viral is a digital project dedicated to education about the 1918 influenza pandemic and other diseases. Using various methods of digital analysis, History Goes Viral attempts to understand disease and its historical impact on society. The project aims to present rigorous academic scholarship in language that is approachable for students to increase critical analysis skills and encourage appreciation of historical discourse. Whenever possible, programs used to create digital presentations are selected due to ease of access, so that students can replicate these projects in other areas of history coursework.

ABOUT THE CURATOR



JESSICA M. DONNELLY

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B.S. Secondary Education, Idaho State University History | Biology

B.A. History, Idaho State University

Jessi Donnelly lives in Southeastern Idaho with her family and half hairless dog. When she's not nerding on history, she's crocheting bacteria buddies or reading books for fun. After high school students told her their favorite lesson she taught was on the Black Death, she set out to create a useful teaching tool dedicated to disease in the modern world.

Thanks and appreciation go to the History Department faculty and students of Idaho State University for their support and guidance. This is an independently owned and operated project.

Find Jessi on Twitter: [@Jessi_Donnelly](#)

HISTORY GOES VIRAL

A DIGITAL HISTORY PROJECT BY JESSICA M. DONNELLY

[HOME](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[FLU](#)
[WAR](#)
[CONTACT](#)

MAPPING SPANISH FLU IN 20 U.S. CITIES | JAN - DEC 1918 | MAPS BY JESSICA M. DONNELLY

Influenza Deaths in 20 U.S. Cities
OCTOBER 1918

Seattle newspaper headline:
CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, SHOWS CLOSED
AMERICANS AND FRENCH SMASH FOL

"I had a little bird
Its name was Enza
I opened up the window
and in flew Enza..."
-1918 Children's Rhyme

Map by Jessica M. Donnelly, source: https://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dzdx/historical_monitoring/1918.pdf

ABOUT THE MAPS

Programs Used:

- ArcGIS - base map of U.S.
- Adobe Illustrator - map building
- Microsoft Excel - data ratios

Data Source:

- U.S. Vital Statistics Mortality Record for 1918

Discussion Questions:

- What do you notice about the spread of Flu through the year 1918?
- How are the outbreaks in the 20 cities chosen different?
- Why do the summer months have less cases of flu nationwide?
- How could you use these maps to make a historical argument?

HISTORY GOES VIRAL

A DIGITAL HISTORY PROJECT BY JESSICA M. DONNELLY

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The Invisible Front: The Diseases of World War I

By Jessi Donnelly

Present

THE INVISIBLE FRONT: DISEASE DURING WORLD WAR I

ABOUT THE PROJECT

- Course Project for Dr. Justin Stover's First World War Course

Programs Used

- Prezi

Discussion Questions:

- Why can we call the diseases of the first world war an invisible front? How does that differ from the other fronts of the war?
- How did disease contribute to innovation during the war?
- What were some of the impacts on the war besides high numbers of ill and dead? In medicine? Psychologically? For civilians? For military leaders?

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