



MSNS AND THE
INFLUENZA

1918-1919

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FACTS ON THE INFLUENZA OUTBREAK DURING WORLD WAR I

- ❖ Dates: March 1918 through Spring 1919
- ❖ The outbreak came in three waves and was known as the Spanish Flu
- ❖ This outbreak killed more people in 1 year than died in the 4 years of the war
- ❖ ¼ of the world population contracted the flu
- ❖ 2 to 4% of all people who were inflicted with the flu, died
- ❖ Estimated death toll worldwide: 50 to 100 million
- ❖ Estimated death toll in the United States: 675,000
- ❖ Because of large urban areas, Pennsylvania was one of the hardest hit states in the U.S. The influenza did not disappear from the state until the summer of 1919
- ❖ Origin: Experts are unable to agree but it appears that it began in a small town in Kansas. Others contend that it began in Vienna in 1917 and others that it began in China in 1916

INFLUENZA CASES REPORTED ON CAMPUS

❖ Faculty minutes noted the worse cases which included the following:

- 7 October 1918: 14 Student Army Training Corps members and 1 female student
- 2 December 1918: 2 women (Sara Wolfskill and Ruth Johnson)
- 13 January 1919: “It is reported that the absences among our Seniors is becoming serious in the Model School. These absences are thought to be due chiefly to illness among the students or to sickness in their homes. There are no cases of serious illness in the school at present.”

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DOCTOR ON CAMPUS

- ❖ The November 1918 Normal Journal reported the following:
 - “Dr. C. Howard Witmer [Class of 1902] is the doctor of the Student Army Training Corps at Millersville. He had charge of the cases of influenza here during the recent epidemic, and is a health officers of Lancaster County.”



MORE NURSES NEEDED



❖ Because of the large number of influenza cases the Normal Journal reported in November 1918:

- “Miss Helms, a professional nurse, came to the school on October 5 to take charge of the influenza cases among the Student Army Training Corps, and lend her help in the girls’ Building if needed.”



OTHER AFFLICTIONS



❖ In addition to the flu, there were often outbreaks of mumps and measles. In the 6 May 1918 Faculty meeting minutes it was reported that 3 girls had the “Liberty measles” and 1 with mumps. The German measles were called “Liberty measles” during the war.

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REPORT IN THE NOVEMBER 1918 NORMAL JOURNAL BY ELISABETH HUGHES CONARD

- ❖ Millersville Normal School, like most parts of the country, had its influenza epidemic. The first few cases developed before we realized what the trouble really was. Therefore the infection got a start and a number of cases broke out through the girls' dormitories.
- ❖ As soon as the Doctors informed us that we were victims of the dreaded epidemic we opened an emergency hospital on the fourth floor, which had recently been vacated as a means of saving coal and light. A careful quarantine was instituted and every precaution practiced to prevent the further spread of the disease.
- ❖ We started our hospital with seventeen cases and in a few days reached the high-water mark of twenty-one. Then the number gradually diminished until there was one lone girl left.
- ❖ About this time cases began to break out among the boys, and a trained nurse was secured. A second hospital was opened, this time on the boys' side of the building.

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REPORT CONTINUED

- ❖ All cases in both hospitals were vigilantly watched and cared for, and we are feeling most thankful that cases developed pneumonia or other serious symptoms and we had no fatalities.
- ❖ A thorough system of quarantine and prevention measures was kept up until we were well satisfied that all danger of a further outbreak was over and all cases completely recovered.
- ❖ It was not until we were practically free from influenza that the authorities ordered the closing of the schools. After a careful investigation the county health officer decided our pupils were safer within the school than in their home communities where the epidemic was at its height or in some only commencing.
- ❖ Because of surrounding conditions, it was necessary to close our doors to day-students, with the exception of those who could give satisfactory evidence that their homes were free from illness and who would walk or come by private conveyance. About thirty whose homes were uninfected came into the building and became boarding students during the period of quarantine.

THE FOOTBALL TEAM IS HIT WITH THE FLU

For the football season the following schedule was arranged:

- Sept. 28—Stevens Trade School in Lancaster.
Oct. 5—Harrisburg Academy in Harrisburg. (Cancelled.)
Lebanon High School substituted. Game in Millersville.
Oct. 12—Lancaster High School in Lancaster. (Cancelled.)
Steelton High School substituted. Game in Millersville.
Oct. 19—Stevens Trade School in Millersville.
Oct. 26—Tarsus Gymnastic School of Harrisburg—in Millersville.
Nov. 2—Unsettled, but probably F. and M. Reserves.

A glance at the schedule shows that it is far from being an easy one. At first few men reported. Then as the S. A. T. C. was organized more men came in. Warfel was elected captain and Rev. Mr. Hartman was secured as coach. There was exceeding rejoicing when Kelly walked in one day. Then as the next two weeks went by Coach Hartman found a new man appearing nearly every evening. But we have had our run of hard luck. The influenza worked havoc with the team. Coach Hartman was out a week with this Hunnish epidemic. Then, too, the boys were soft and by the time military drill was over most of them had lost their football pep and enthusiasm. Despite the number of boys here—enough for four teams at least—we have found it practically impossible to get any scrimmage, so the team has had practically no scrimmage practice. So we could enumerate further our troubles.

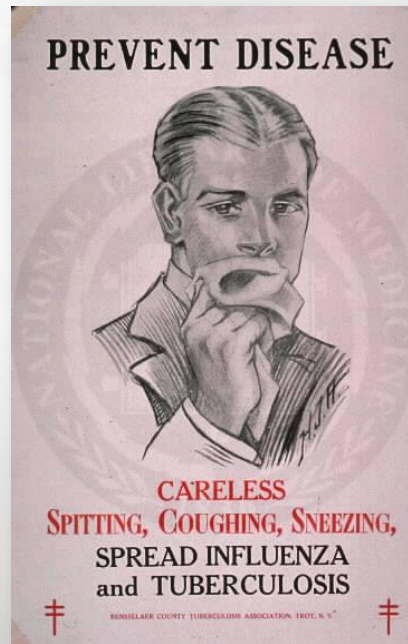
As reported in the
November 1918
Normal Journal

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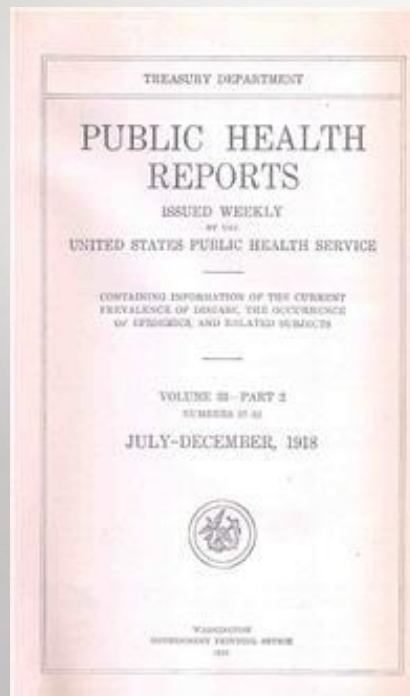
LITERARY SOCIETIES AFFECTED

- ❖ The November 1918 Normal Journal also reported:
 - “On account of the influenza, for the first time in many years some meetings of the Normal and Page Societies were passed over. The Normal Society on September 27 incorporated in its program a “Community Sing,” at which we sang the old war songs and practiced the new ones under direction of Miss Quimby.”

EDUCATING AGAINST THE FLU



PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS



During the pandemic, Public Health Reports provided public health experts with weekly updates on the flu as well as other diseases [Credit: Office of the Public Health Service Historian]

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INFLUENZA DEATHS AMONG MILLERSVILLE ALUM AND FORMER STUDENTS

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- ❖ Roy Adams, former Model School student died 30 September 1918 in Philadelphia (Samuel Adams, his brother, was serving overseas)
- ❖ Alverda Andrew, Class of 1919, died 18 December 1918, died at Albright College where she had transferred
- ❖ A. Nevin Brubaker, Class of 1908, died 12 October 1918 in New Oxford, he was serving as the minister at the Reformed Church in New Oxford at the time
- ❖ W. Eugene Evans, Class of 1904, died 9 January 1919
- ❖ Ralph Gochenour, died 15 October 1918
- ❖ Mary Zwalley Hayes, a student from 1916-1917, died in Boston in 1918 while continuing her education there

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INFLUENZA DEATHS AMONG MILLERSVILLE ALUM AND FORMER STUDENTS

- ❖ Dr. Elmer E. Lenhardt, Class of 1900, died 6 October 1918 in Millersville
- ❖ Katharine Rohrer May, Class of 1907, died 16 October 1918 in Muscle Shoals, Alabama
- ❖ John M. Stapleton, who taught Physical Culture at MSNS from 1904-1906, died in Cleveland in 1918
- ❖ Mildred Deibler Strong, Class of 1905, died in Mahanoy City in 1918
- ❖ John I. Wentz, Class of 1908, died in 1918
- ❖ Edgar D. Yingling, Class of 1917, died 18 October 1918 in Pittsburgh, Pa. while attending the Carnegie Institute where he was taking a war course in motor mechanics