

DePauw University

Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University

Student Research

Student Work

12-2021

Town and Gown Amidst a Public Health Crisis: Greencastle and DePauw University's Responses to the 1918 Influenza Epidemic

Leah Smith
DePauw University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.depauw.edu/studentresearchother>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Leah, "Town and Gown Amidst a Public Health Crisis: Greencastle and DePauw University's Responses to the 1918 Influenza Epidemic" (2021). *Student Research*. 46.
<https://scholarship.depauw.edu/studentresearchother/46>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research by an authorized administrator of Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University.

**Town and Gown Amidst a Public Health Crisis:
Greencastle and DePauw University's Responses to the 1918 Influenza Epidemic**

Leah Smith

HIST 490: Seminar

Professor Bruggemann

December 14, 2021

“ORDER SCHOOLS CLOSED. All places of public gathering, including schools, churches, and moving picture shows, have been ordered to be closed indefinitely – epidemic of influenza spread.” This declaration was published in the *Herald-Democrat*, a local Greencastle, Indiana newspaper, on Friday, October 11, 1918.¹ If not for the rhetoric, one could assume that this article was published recently in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the *Herald-Democrat* was actually referring to the 1918 influenza epidemic which was ravaging the globe and had recently arrived in the small Indiana town.

Influenza struck Indiana in the fall of 1918. The *Indianapolis News* reported its first influenza deaths on September 26, 1918 when Walter Hensley and Harold Johnson, both of Indianapolis, succumbed to the virus while at military training camps. This announcement foreshadowed the death to come. Public health officials attempted to proactively combat the spread of disease as Dr. Herman G. Morgan, secretary of the Indianapolis Board of Health, directed all public places to be “placed at once in thorough sanitary condition by fumigation and cleansing.”² The disease was too virulent, though, and just three days after the public health directive, four influenza cases were reported in the urban city.³ Influenza continued to spread, and the combination of military and civilian cases resulted in an Indianapolis Board of Health mandate against gatherings of five or more persons. The edict was to be enforced by the Indianapolis police.⁴ Once again, though, the virus could not be contained, and it began to sweep through the rural Indiana countryside.

¹ “Orders Schools Closed,” *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 6.

² Protective Steps Taken by Mayor,” *Indianapolis News*, September 27, 1918, 1.

³ “Four Influenza Cases Reported in the City,” *Indianapolis News*, September 30, 1918, 1.

⁴ “Public Meetings are Forbidden,” *Indianapolis News*, October 7, 1918, 1.

From Indianapolis, the epidemic spread to nearby Greencastle. Roughly 40 miles from the Hoosier capital lay the college town, home to DePauw University.⁵ College towns are unique entities due to the overlap and interaction between the two distinct communities. The power dynamic and relationship between the two is frequently referred to as town and gown, where in this case, town refers to Greencastle and gown refers to DePauw University. Greencastle, like many other college towns, found itself in a unique position due to the high proportion of university-aged individuals. The greater Greencastle community and DePauw University had to acknowledge the risk faced by their youthful population. The epidemic would leave its mark on the small, Indiana town as both town and gown experienced a turbulent 1918 autumn riddled with death, illness, and social disruption.

The documented stories of Greencastle and DePauw's experience of the 1918 influenza epidemic emphasize the similarities and differences experienced between the town and its university. While both Greencastle and DePauw faced social discord and academic disruption, the town experienced more death. DePauw's institutional status granted the administration the ability to implement proactive measures with their student body which included sending students home, isolating other students, and caring for sick students under one roof. The ability to exercise control over the student population gave the university more authority in its decisions related to public health. Greencastle as a town, on the other hand, had less of that authority and could not control the lives of its citizens.

Following the conclusion of the epidemic, DePauw University and Greencastle seemingly forgot about the influenza virus. Little academic literature exists that covers the devastating

⁵ Google Maps, "Directions from Indianapolis, Indiana to Greencastle, Indiana," Accessed September 30, 2021.

period of time that the university and city experienced. Most evidence of the epidemic in Greencastle can be found in the archives of the Herald-Democrat, the local newspaper, as well as within various documents that have been archived by DePauw - from the annual university reports to the *Mirage*, the school yearbook. Historians, including DePauw University 2005 graduate Austin Arceo, argue that the lack of scholarship relating to the 1918 influenza epidemic is due to the compounding impact of nationalism during World War I, which was still taking place at the start of the influenza epidemic.⁶ Massive government efforts attempted to propagate a sense of national identity and patriotic duty to amplify morale on both the warfront and the home front. The government believed that fixation on the influenza virus would take energy away from efforts to win World War I. The 1918 virus has only more recently come under scholarly scrutiny given the 100th anniversary of the influenza epidemic in 2018 and the onset of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Revisiting the 1918 period of influenza in rural Indiana shines the spotlight on how a college town dealt with one of the deadliest pandemics to have faced the world in its known history. Examining the state of healthcare in the small Indiana town will contextualize the environment in which the virus was lived. Then, acknowledging the differences between town, Greencastle, and gown, DePauw University, in their respective climates and experiences with the influenza, will demonstrate the differences in mortality, morbidity, and social disruption between the two. The case study of Greencastle, Indiana's bout with the 1918 influenza epidemic highlights the implications of institutional control, or lack thereof, regarding the coordination and follow-through of public health policies. Much can be learned from the past,

⁶ Austin Arceo, "The Influenza Epidemic: A Memorable Impact Pushed Out of Memory?," (Greencastle, Indiana: DePauw University, 2006), 2.

and the revival of academic focus on past pandemics will create greater awareness for public health measures going forward.

The Virus

The virus that caused the 1918 influenza outbreak has a mysterious origin. In January of 1918, an abnormal influenza outbreak was occurring in Haskell County, Kansas. Soon thereafter, the outbreak spread to Camp Funston, a Kansas army base, after men from Haskell County reported for combat training as the United States entered World War I. During the outbreak at Camp Funston, 38 men died, 1,100 were admitted to the hospital, and thousands more were sick in the barracks.⁷ From there, the disease continued to spread throughout the country and was eventually taken overseas with the movement of American troops to the European theatre. While some epidemiologists today speculate that the virus that started in Kansas is what caused the 1918 epidemic, there is still a lack of consensus amongst the scientific community.

The origin of the 1918 influenza virus was mistakenly deemed to be Spain. Spanish news source Agencia Fabra reported on the influenza in spring of 1918, stating that “a strange form of disease of epidemic character has appeared in Madrid.” Spain was one of the few countries to report upon the disease, as other countries, in attempts to keep morale high with their engagement in war, censored the press from reporting on the disease. Not occupied with World War I, Spain earned a wrongful association with the origin of the influenza because of the free press. The disease became known colloquially as the “Spanish Influenza” and the

⁷ John M. Barry, “How the Horrific 1918 Flu Spread Across America,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/journal-plague-year-180965222/>.

“Spanish Lady”.⁸ The nicknames have since stuck with the virus, and the virus is still incorrectly called the “Spanish flu” even today. The trend to name a disease after its alleged origin can be very stigmatizing to groups of individuals or cultures. Wartime did not just affect the free press but also enabled the virus to spread and develop into a world-wide pandemic.

The effect of military movement and wartime on the spread of influenza cannot be understated. The crowded, communal living of troops fostered a breeding ground for disease, and given the virulence of the 1918 influenza virus, the spread of disease amongst the military was striking. The movement of American troops between two military camps in the fall of 1918 demonstrates the contagiousness of the influenza virus. Departing from Camp Grant, in Rockford, Illinois, via train, 3,108 troops were headed for Camp Hancock, outside of Augusta, Georgia. Directly after the departure, a civilian health official demanded that Camp Grant be quarantined due to an outbreak of influenza; unfortunately, the health official did not act quickly enough to stop the train from leaving Camp Grant. The virus spread on the train, and upon its arrival at Camp Hancock, approximately one fourth of the troops were immediately hospitalized. It is estimated that ten percent of the troops on the train succumbed to death from the virus despite having begun their trip with good health.⁹ The virus moved with an aggressive virulence throughout the country and eventually abroad as troops were sent overseas to engage on the warfront. Had the virus attempted to take hold during peacetime, it is possible that it would have not spread nearly as quickly or as far. The movement of troops

⁸ Antoni Trilla, Guillem Trilla, Carolyn Daer, “The 1918 ‘Spanish Flu’ in Spain,” *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 47, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 668. <https://doi.org/10.1086/590567>.

⁹ John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018), 217.

between military camps and battlefronts both abroad and domestically greatly accelerated the spread of influenza and subsequent infection and death.

Wartime enabled the dissemination of influenza virus around the world, but the virus itself was responsible for high rates of mortality and morbidity. The 1918 influenza was unique amongst the class of influenza viruses. Influenza typically targets the elderly and the very young which make up the vulnerable ends of the spectrum of the human population.¹⁰ The influenza virus that was responsible for the 1918 pandemic was characterized by its morbidity pattern, notably “affecting mostly young and healthy persons” and distinguished by “rapid disease progression to fatal multiorgan failure.”¹¹ Individuals 20 to 40 years of age accounted for almost half of the influenza-related deaths during the 1918 year. The target demographics being primarily young adults was unique to this virus. There are many theories for why this was the case, and while there is still not an agreed upon explanation, one belief is that the virus itself triggered an immune response that was more fatal than the actual disease. As individuals 20 to 40 years of age have some of the strongest immune systems, their overwhelming immune response was responsible for their demise. The virus took the world by storm, threatening the lives and livelihoods of thousands of young men and women.

Healthcare in Greencastle

¹⁰ Jeffrey K. Taubenberger, David M. Morens, “1918 Influenza: the Mother of All Pandemics,” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 15-22. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1201.050979>.

¹¹ Trilla, Trilla, Daer, “The 1918 ‘Spanish Flu’ in Spain,” 668.

Healthcare in the early 1900s looked much different than it does today. Scientific advancements and technological developments have allowed for great medical progressions to be made. In 1918, when the influenza epidemic began, the most conclusive theory that epidemiologists agreed upon was that influenza was a “specific, communicable disease.”¹² Healthcare was not corporatized as it is today, and in many areas of the country, particularly rural, healthcare was not prioritized on an institutional level. Greencastle and DePauw University had different systems of healthcare for their citizens and students, respectively, which reflects the priorities of each community.

Disease and illness, believed to be more natural and less preventable, took a back seat during the prioritization of Greencastle’s development. Residents found investing in a local jail to be much more beneficial in the early 1800s, when the first Putnam County jail was built, as protecting their “property and persons from the bad guys” was more important than “protecting their bodies from the onslaught of disease and epidemic.”¹³ This perspective was common at the time due to the structure of healthcare in America; it was not until 1917, when the Indiana Hospital Act was passed by the Indiana General Assembly, that a hospital was made “available through taxation and provided for management outside the medical profession.” The hospital was not built until 1923, five years after the arrival of influenza.¹⁴ Up until that year, the community was dependent on house calls from physicians and minor surgeries at the physicians’ offices. Serious illness required a trip to Terre Haute or Indianapolis, which could take anywhere from two to six hours at minimum. During times of major health crises, the

¹² John M. Eyler, “The State of Science, Microbiology, and Vaccines Circa 1918,” *Public Health Reports* 125, no. 3 (2010): 27-36. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862332/>.

¹³ John J. Baughman, *Our Past, Their Presents: Historical Essays on Putnam County, Indiana*, (Greencastle, Indiana: Putnam County Museum, 2008), 339.

¹⁴ Baughman, *Our Past, Their Presents: Historical Essays on Putnam County, Indiana*, 341.

distance and time taken traveling could be the difference between life or death. Healthcare resources were poorly allocated as much of the burden was placed upon the local physicians to meet each of their patient's needs, wherever they may be located within the greater Greencastle community. The need for greater investment into public health and medical resources would soon become apparent upon the arrival of the 1918 influenza epidemic.

DePauw University, on the other hand, was home to two infirmaries. Though not as developed as a hospital, the infirmary provided space for sick individuals to be cared for under one roof. DePauw staffed two nurses to care for the students. Augusta Hankins worked from 1917 through 1918, and Blanche E. Standish worked from 1918 to 1920.¹⁵ The short length of their careers at DePauw, especially that of Augusta Hankins, could point to burnout from the stress and rigor of taking care of young adults during the influenza epidemic. While the nurses did not have to travel from household to household, like the Greencastle physicians did, their roles on campus likely still needed more support than what was given.

The lack of support for student health on DePauw's campus did not go unnoticed. Dean of Women Katherine Sprague Alvord was the designated advocate and representative for the women on DePauw's campus. However, the administrator also served as an advocate for the health of both male and female students, and she paid due diligence to the state of student health and wellbeing on campus. Alvord's 1917 to 1918 report, which was written prior to the arrival of influenza, detailed contentment regarding the resources being allocated to student's physical well-being. Rosa Bower was a house on campus dedicated to students most in need of care. An infirmary in Rector Hall, a dormitory, was also utilized. Alvord, however, did relay that

¹⁵ DePauw University Archives, "Historical Faculty and Staff Directory", 2019.

university students were in “urgent need of a ward or house where contagious cases can be taken care of away from the rest of the student body.”¹⁶ Dean Alvord was not one to become complacent within her role as Dean of Women, though, and she was consistently speaking up for the students’ needs. The Dean of Women was also unknowingly foreshadowing a need that would be exacerbated with the arrival of the contagious influenza epidemic that was to come just a few months later.

Apart from the university’s infirmaries, DePauw also had a university nurse who made house calls similar to that of Greencastle and Putnam County physicians. In total the nurse made 665 sick calls during the academic year, had 125 office consultations, and also held Red Cross courses in Home Nursing. Upon detailing these statistics, Dean Alvord writes, the “necessity and advantage of having a college nurse has been proved beyond a question.”¹⁷ Dean Alvord’s analysis advocated for the student well-being by declaring the need for a college nurse to President Grose. The university would surely be grateful for the Dean of Women’s forward-thinking with the arrival of influenza during the next academic year.

Town: Greencastle

Greencastle, Indiana was a small community in the early 1900s. Approximately 3,780 people called Greencastle home at the time according to the United States Decennial Census of 1920.¹⁸ The city’s economic basis in the twentieth century was a mixture of agricultural and manufacturing industries. Automobiles, electricity, telephones, radio, supermarkets,

¹⁶ Katherine Sprague Alvord, “Report of the Dean of Women,” *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol V, No. 7, (Greencastle, Indiana: 1918), 29.

¹⁷ Alvord, “Report of the Dean of Women,” 29.

¹⁸ United States Census Bureau, “Decennial Census of Population and Housing”, 1920, accessed November 1, 2021.

consolidated schools, and extension services from Purdue University had helped the rural community overcome its isolation.¹⁹ Greencastle was also home to DePauw University, a private co-educational undergraduate institution.

Despite its rural setting, the community of Greencastle was not untouched by the spreading epidemic. In October of 1918 alone, 31 Greencastle residents of all ages died from influenza.²⁰ Dorothy Keightley, a sixteen-year-old Greencastle girl, was the first to pass away. Falling sick from influenza on Saturday, September 29, 1918, Dorothy died less than one week later, on October 4, 1918. Dorothy was a sophomore in high school and daughter of a local barber. The death was a shock to friends and family alike.²¹ Dorothy's death was just the beginning of the ravaging of the Greencastle community by the influenza epidemic during the fall of 1918. The residents of Greencastle would become all too familiar with the disease that would soon claim their family, friends, and acquaintances.

Influenza spread quickly and was soon found in many pockets of Greencastle. Amongst its many victims were two young children. Dorothy Barnett, age eight, and Arthur Totten, age two, passed away from the disease within an hour of each other. The former died at home while the latter died at home in Greencastle's Methodist orphanage.²² The death of these children and many more, whom typically are seen as symbols of hope for future generations was disheartening for Greencastle residents to experience. Influenza found its victims in youth and young adults alike. Adults and elderly were not to be spared, either.

¹⁹ Baughman, *Our Past, Their Presents: Historical Essays on Putnam County, Indiana*, 4-5.

²⁰ Putnam County Health Department death records, 1918.

²¹ "Influenza is Fatal to High School Student," *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 2.

²² "Influenza is Fatal to Two," *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 6.

In addition to the mortalities of the youth population was the death of prominent adult community members. Minor Pickett, age thirty, was a schoolteacher, athletic director, and the principal of Bainbridge High School. Pickett was quite popular with students and the community alike; his death was felt by many, including his three brothers and four sisters.²³ As one can expect, the rampant death left many families grieving the loss of loved ones. The deaths of adults left many necessary roles, like those of teachers and educational administrators, unfilled within the Greencastle community. Young or old, the influenza did not discriminate.

Influenza's affliction of the Greencastle community was much greater than just the mortalities. Morbidity rate was much higher than mortality rate, as many individuals fell sick but did not pass away from the disease. The prevalence of influenza within the community was striking. The disease interrupted day-to-day life, and even city council meetings were interrupted by the virus. The Tuesday, October 7 city council meeting was short and "little business was transacted" as "two councilmen were absent and Dr. W. M. McGaughey, the city clerk, was so busy caring for the influenza sufferers that he was present for only a few minutes."²⁴ The disruption to normalcy prevented normal business from occurring and resulted in panic amongst some Greencastle residents. Physicians relayed that many individuals were so alarmed that they were "imagining that they are suffering of the disease when they have only a slight cold or a little of the old-fashioned grippe."²⁵ The influenza was not just interrupting the typical happenings of Greencastle. The disease was also inducing psychological fear that stressed residents and eventually fell back onto the already overwhelmed physicians.

²³ "Minor Pickett Dead of Flu," *Herald-Democrat*, November 29, 1918, 3.

²⁴ *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 4.

²⁵ "Influenza Situation is Better," *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 4.

The strain on local physicians to keep up with helping townspeople through the pandemic eventually became too much. Dr. Charles Sudranski, a thirty-eight-year-old physician, was found dead by his brother, having committed suicide just one week after the death of his wife. Retroactively, many had claimed to notice the nervous condition that the weeks of treating patients ill with influenza had left Dr. Sudranski with; however, no one had “feared that his condition would lead to an act so rash.” The weeks of dealing with the pandemic coupled with the recent death and burial of his wife was far too strenuous for the prominent physician.²⁶ The reach of the influenza ranged far from its original victims and found itself ravaging the lives of those within secondary and tertiary social circles of its victims – particularly those who were attempting to combat the disease on behalf of others. Healthcare workers were struggling to keep up with the strain of a magnified workload as they had to provide normal patient care in addition to care for those suffering from the influenza. The emotional and mental strain of the epidemic, though not as easily acknowledged, had a clear effect on Greencastle residents, specifically the health care providers.

With the epidemic’s arrival in Greencastle came a rise in public health advocacy. The Red Cross of Indiana would disseminate information through local newspapers, like the *Herald-Democrat*, on how to lessen the intensity of influenza. Amongst the advice included recommendations to stay home when feeling any slight illness, to avoid crowds, to wear masks when assisting influenza patients, and to “wash out the nose and throat two to three times daily with a normal salt solution”. Recommendations were even given for individual diets and choice of apparel.²⁷ These recommendations are one example of public health policies and

²⁶ “Physician Ends Life By Suicide,” *Herald-Democrat*, November 11, 1918, 6.

recommendations that arose amidst the pandemic. While some of the advice is still applicable, other parts of the advice demonstrate the lack of scientific knowledge about the virus.

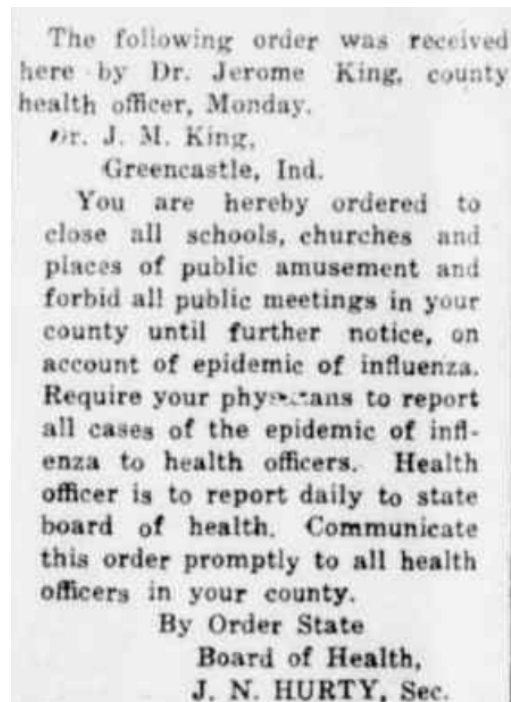


Image 1. Photo of the public health directive from the State Board of Health that was relayed by Dr. Jerome King mandating the closure of schools, churches, and places of public amusement.

The local and state boards of health had a large hand in the happenings within the greater Greencastle communities as well as other parts of the state. Putnam County Health Commissioner, Dr. Jerome King, relayed an order from the State Board of Health that closed "city schools, churches, opera house, moving picture shows, and all other places of public gathering" on October 7, 1918.²⁷ This order was mandated in response to rising cases of influenza. Public health officials hoped to account for the spread of the virus by shutting down areas with the potential for the spread of disease. The mandate, while well-intentioned, would

²⁷ "Rules for Combatting Influenza Epidemic," *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 6.

²⁸ "Orders Schools Closed," *Herald-Democrat*, 6.

be hard to maintain due to the inevitable public pushback as the citizen's livelihoods and economic security were being jeopardized.

Despite the rise in public health policies and advocacy, the residents of Greencastle did not necessarily adhere to the advice. The first flu mask was not spotted in downtown Greencastle until late November of 1918. Worn by Mrs. Will S. Torr, the *Herald Democrat* reported that she was traveling to Indianapolis, where masks were required, to visit her hospitalized husband. Clearly, this was not in accordance with social norms as the occurrence of the mask, titled "First 'Flu' Mask Appears on Square", was unique enough to garner an article in the local newspaper.²⁹ The trend to dismiss public health measures is controversial even today, and the lack of compliance with medical recommendations is nothing new. The experience of Greencastle citizens during the influenza epidemic was largely dictated by their adherence, or lack thereof, to preventative public health measures.

Gown: DePauw University

As it is today, DePauw University was a small, private liberal arts university in the early 1900s. Being co-educational, men and women collectively made up the student population of approximately 900 students. Unique to the 1918 year, the university had initiated a Student Army Training Corp, or S.A.T.C., on its campus on October 1, 1918 under the direction of Captain John L. Frazee. As written in the *Mirage*, the "campus took on the air of a military reservation rather than anything pertaining to college environment" upon the establishment of the S.A.T.C.³⁰ The men were to be prepared for potential deployment into active duty to fight in

²⁹ "First 'Flu' Mask Appears on Square," *Herald-Democrat*, November 29, 1918, 2.

World War I. The military mobilization that was responsible for the dissemination of the influenza virus was now present on DePauw's campus. The presence of the S.A.T.C. at the university held significant implications for the way in which the influenza epidemic was experienced by the student body.

The university's experience of the 1918 influenza epidemic was quite different than that of surrounding Greencastle. While campus life experienced some changes and students fell ill, the campus had no student deaths to the disease. DePauw President George Grose wrote in his annual report in June of 1919 that "the year has been one of good health both among Faculty and students" going on to detail that "it is most gratifying to note that not a single student was lost by death during the epidemic". Grose does add that "one of the most promising members of the Senior class died", but the president does not offer explanation for the cause of death – whether it was influenza or something else.³¹ The fact that none of the students succumbed to the disease is remarkable given influenza's fatality rate for university-aged students. DePauw's proactive measures, like having an infirmary and dispersing the student population, to dispel threats to the health of the community of undergraduate students had paid off.

Though the university campus did not have any student deaths, they certainly had influenza cases. The Rosa Bower infirmary housed all sick male DePauw University students. When the infirmary reached capacity at twenty-one men, the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity annex was utilized for all overflow patients. At one point, there were ten men being cared for in the Phi Kappa Psi house.³² President Grose assuredly reported that there were never any serious

³⁰ *The Mirage of 1919: Official Yearbook of DePauw University*, (Anderson, Indiana: Herald Publishing Co., 1919), 220.

³¹ George Grose, "Annual Report of the President to the Board of Trustees and Visitors of DePauw University," June 10, 1919, 3.

cases of influenza, but clearly, the epidemic was placing stress on the university's resources that were directed to bettering student's health.³³ The need for greater investment in healthcare was noticeable, and Dean Alvord's suggestions from the Report of the Dean of Women were fully legitimized. The university campus may not have seen stark illness or death from the influenza, but DePauw still felt the effects of the epidemic in many ways.

The university's administration reacted swiftly to the arrival of influenza to DePauw's rural Indiana setting. After being ordered closed by the State Department of Health, DePauw's administration released notice that all the female students, also known as the "co-eds", were to be sent home for approximately three weeks. The male students, however, were required to remain on campus to train for the S.A.T.C. This decision was made to diminish the ability of influenza to spread and infect more individuals. Colloquially known as the "flu vacation", all classes were cancelled for the time being.³⁴ This decision had dire effects on both campus morale and women's enrollment.

The male students who stayed on campus were not necessarily better off. With classes cancelled, life at DePauw was comparable being at a military camp as the men who were left on campus were training with the S.A.T.C. According to the *Mirage* yearbook, life in the S.A.T.C. before the influenza was a merry round of reveille, toast, coffee, oatmeal, policing, calisthenics, drill, classes, horse-meat, boiled potatoes, prunes (or dried apples), BEANS, rice, more classes, drill, shoe-shining, retreat, more horse-meat, more boiled potatoes, more prunes (or dried apples), more BEANS, more rice, more study, and then taps. Ditto, ditto, ditto, ad infinitum."³⁵

³² George B. Manhart, *DePauw Through the Years: Volume I, Indiana Asbury University, 1837-1884, DePauw University, 1884-1919*, (Chicago, Illinois: Lakeside Press, 1962), 286-287.

³³ George Grose, Message to Pearl Woody, October 1918.

³⁴ Manhart, *DePauw Through the Years: Volume I, Indiana Asbury University, 1837-1884, DePauw University, 1884-1919*, 286-287.

The description is written with a clear sense of sarcasm, and the author makes it clear that he is not a fan of beans, nor the busy, repetitive, highly structured schedule of day-to-day life. Once classes were cancelled, though, the routine became even more monotonous, and the male students were explicitly subjected to military life. The feelings of frustration and boredom were quickly exacerbated.

Any sense of normalcy was stripped from DePauw's male student body following the university's imposition of influenza-related policies. Having recently adopted S.A.T.C. regulations, along with the cancellation of classes and removal of women from campus, the men experienced a "degenerating period" where, as explained by a student editor of the *Mirage*, "our manners slipped from us, along with our neckties, and the seats of our trousers".³⁶ The change was noticed by administrators, too, with President Grose writing that the "College campus has been affected by the atmosphere of the time, resulting in a spirit of restlessness, lawlessness, and irresponsibility, greatly interfering with the efficiency of academic work".³⁷ The disruption of everyday life, as well as the lack of women, apparently, was drastically affecting the etiquette and work ethic of S.A.T.C. members. The epidemic, compounded with wartime implications, was taking its toll mentally and emotionally on the remaining men on DePauw's campus.

Placed under strict quarantine rules, though, the men were not even allowed into town. John L. Taylor, general secretary of the Y.M.C.A. organization on campus, took it upon himself to assist the quarantined students in any way possible. The Young Men's Christian Association,

³⁵ *The Mirage of 1919: Official Yearbook of DePauw University*, 227.

³⁶ *The Mirage of 1919: Official Yearbook of DePauw University*, 227.

³⁷ George Gross, "Annual Report of the President to the Board of Trustees and Visitors of DePauw University," *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol XI, No. 7, June 10, 1919, 3.

or Y.M.C.A., was started out of goodwill and implemented a program of morale and welfare services for the military upon America's entrance to World War I. The Y.M.C.A. wished to support members of the military through programs and services that helped spiritual and circumstantial needs.³⁸ Surely, John L. Taylor was attempting to accomplish the Y.M.C.A.'s mission by assisting DePauw University's S.A.T.C. As detailed in *The Mirage*, "Secretary Taylor was messenger, postman, and express carrier combined"; the yearbook called it "an extraordinary day when he made fewer than fifteen trips to town".³⁹ Taylor was responsible for bridging the gap between the isolated students of DePauw and the Greencastle community amidst the epidemic. The Y.M.C.A. general secretary helped support the male students throughout a difficult time, likely helping to alleviate some of the stress the S.A.T.C. members endured.

Despite the cancellation of classes, removal of women from campus, and imposed quarantine, men's athletics persisted during the fall of 1918. Football was the only team in season at the time. DePauw played Purdue on a Saturday, mid-October, when all the women had been sent home due to the influenza.⁴⁰ DePauw's football team even continued the storied Wabash rivalry in November of 1918, having to move the location of the match-up from Indianapolis to Crawfordsville due to Indianapolis's public health policies.⁴¹ Over 600 DePauw supporters attended the Wabash game – outnumbering the opponents – and the energy of the game was high. According to the *Herald-Democrat*: "DePauw's bleating goats went wild from the grandstand and rushed on the field at the sound of the Tigers' final note, hoisted their

³⁸ "Our History," Armed Services YMCA, accessed November 2, 2021, <https://www.asymca.org/history>.

³⁹ *The Mirage of 1919: Official Yearbook of DePauw University*, 229.

⁴⁰ "Purdue-DePauw Game Saturday," *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918, 5.

⁴¹ "D'Pauw Wabash will Play in Crawfordsville," *Herald-Democrat*, November 22, 1918, 4.

fighting warriors to their shoulders and carried them off the field.”⁴² The celebration and popularity of the football game surely stuck out to players and fans alike given the dismal, deathly atmosphere many individuals were typically surrounded with.

The reports of the football games were reported in the local *Herald Democrat* alongside news articles detailing school shutdowns, updates on the epidemic, and local obituaries. The *Herald-Democrat* from November 8, 1918 has two starkly different article titles just one column away from each other. The first “DePauw Rallies to Win Contest” is an article explaining the 25 to 12 win of DePauw football over Franklin College. The article details play-by-play through the quarters.⁴³ Just two columns over is an article “Reports Sixteen Burials: Cemetery report of Superintendent James Daggy for the month of October shows great toll of influenza in this vicinity.” This article details deaths of citizens from age 1 to 66 who died from influenza and pneumonia.⁴⁴ The contrast is striking and feels rather hypocritical of DePauw’s administration. The university’s administration was likely attempting to counter the increasing degradation of morale amongst its male student body.

The football games appear to have been very isolated from the happenings of the real world. In one article, Coach Buss, head of the DePauw football coaching staff, says that the game against storied rival Wabash College is “win or die fighting”. Coach Buss was wholeheartedly oblivious – or ignorant – to the recent connotation that so many Greencastle individuals would associate with the word “die” upon reading the *Herald-Democrat* article.⁴⁵ DePauw had taken the influenza epidemic quite seriously in all other regards. The

⁴² “DePauw Beats Wabash 28-6: Giants Slow Up,” *Herald-Democrat*, November 29, 1918, 3.

⁴³ “DePauw Rallies to Win Contest,” *Herald-Democrat*, November 8, 1918, 7.

⁴⁴ “Reports Sixteen Burials,” *Herald-Democrat*, November 8, 1918, 7.

⁴⁵ “D’Pauw Wabash will Play in Crawfordsville,” *Herald-Democrat*, 4.

administration had cancelled classes, sent women home, and risked enrollment rates and profits, yet they were willing to allow the pursuit of athletic events. Given the standard that had been set, DePauw's decision to approve the playing of football appears contradictory.

While the population of female students were sent home from campus for part of the fall term, their removal did not free them from being impacted by the burdensome influenza. In fact, of the 491 women who started the fall term as students at DePauw University, only 409 returned to the third term. 82 women withdrew from the university due to the abnormal experience which accounted for "more withdrawals than at any time in the last four years".⁴⁶ This number stood out to Dean of Women Katherine Sprague Alvord, and she noted it in her report to President Grose. The female students of DePauw were also greatly impacted by the epidemic as some of them did not return to campus following being sent home. Their pursuit of higher education at a time when women were still advocating for equal rights ended abruptly.

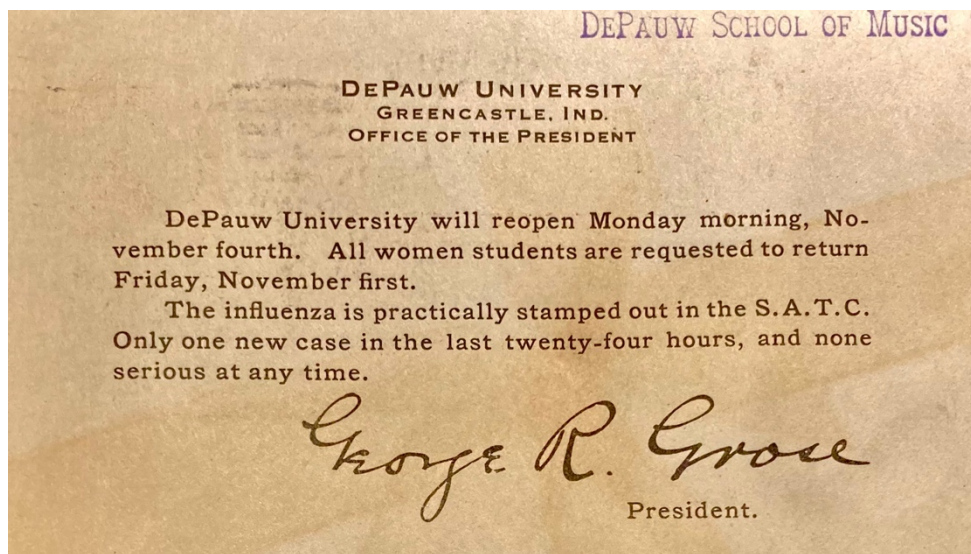


Image 2. Notice from President George Grose to DePauw student Pearl Woody

⁴⁶ Katherine Sprague Alvord, "Report of the Dean of Women," *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol XI, No. 7, June 6, 1919, 23.

about return of female students to campus.

DePauw's female students were allowed back to campus following President Grose's notice at the beginning of November. The women were to report to campus Friday, November 1st, and class was to begin Monday, November 4th.⁴⁷ An article titled "The Boys Are All Right" in the local newspaper relayed the healthy status of the men on campus, as well as the public health policy DePauw would follow upon the women's arrival. The "young ladies will be placed in quarantine immediately after they arrive, and their health conditions will be closely guarded" in order to "prevent the incoming girls from bringing a new start of influenza to the school and town".⁴⁸ The imposed quarantine on women who were likely arriving from many different parts of the state and country was a responsible measure on the part of DePauw's administration to proactively safeguard the campus against a new outbreak. The article also mentioned protecting the town which is one of the few moments when the close-knit relationships between Greencastle and DePauw is mentioned throughout influenza-related dialogue. DePauw acknowledged the risk it was bringing to Greencastle with the return of its female student body and pledged to watch out for the townspeople.

Difference Between Town and Gown

Despite the intricate connections between town and gown, the impact of the epidemic was far from the same. Greencastle faced high mortality. DePauw University, on the other hand, more so experienced social discord, conflicting policy, and academic disruption. The two environments, which co-existed and even overlapped at points, played host to great disparity in

⁴⁷ President George Grose, Message to Pearl Woody, October 1918.

⁴⁸ "To Quarentine D'Pauw Girls", *Herald-Democrat*, November 1, 1918, 1.

their respective experiences of influenza. Acknowledging the differences between town and gown allows for greater understanding of college town relationships amidst public health crises.

Death rates of Greencastle residents were much higher for the fall of 1918 as opposed to any other time. The Putnam County Health Department records detail that 31 of the 45 deaths for October of 1918 were from influenza or pneumonia. The following year in October of 1919, only 3 of the 15 deaths reported to the health department were from influenza.⁴⁹ Not only did the proportion of deaths due to influenza drastically decrease, but the overall number of deaths was a third of what it was in 1918. The severity of the disease afflicted the community as they grieved the losses of sons, daughters, siblings, mothers, fathers, and grandparents.

The mental and emotional strain of the influenza was likely just as harmful as the illness. Countless death with no cure in sight induced depressing times for individuals as they had no idea what would come next. Uncertainty, coupled with the loss of loved ones and community members, could push even the local physician to his breaking point, as he committed suicide. The devastating period of the fall of 1918 brought loss in a multitude of fashions to the greater Greencastle community.

DePauw University's healthcare system was even tested, as low satisfaction was reported from the university's nurses. The typical DePauw University nurse was assigned explicitly to the wellbeing of the men in S.A.T.C. while a different nurse was hired to care for DePauw's female student population. The care outcomes for ill students actually decreased despite the addition of a new nurse, though, as the university ran into problems with not having housing for contagious students. Cases of scarlet fever rendered the Rosa Bower

⁴⁹ Putnam County Health Department death records, 1918 – 1919.

infirmary inaccessible to newly sick students as the house did not have separate rooms for contagion. Dean Alvord writes, in her 1919 report to President Grose, that reorganizing “the work of the supervision of the health of the students” is imperative so that the administration “may be able to secure the best results for the whole body of students”.⁵⁰ Dean Alvord had previously advocated for separate isolation housing in her 1918 report to President Grose and continued to do so in her 1920 report to President Grose. Leading the charge for better campus resources for student’s health, Dean Alvord was an advocate for both men and women.

Academics were incredibly disrupted with the prolonged university shutdown. The Dean of College reported to President Grose on the status of scholarship for the 1918 to 1919 academic year. The epidemic, he wrote, “interfered seriously with the work of many students, who were ill both before and after the suspension”.⁵¹ The Dean of College points to the illness itself, suggesting that the shutdown of campus had offered only a partial solution for the university’s predicament during the pandemic. Many students still came down with the influenza even after returning to campus. Their health suffered and subsequently, their grades did as well.

The shutdown of campus also offset the academic schedule for the remainder of the school year. Traditionally, students did not attend class during the Christmas holiday and New Year’s Day. The *DePauw Daily* article “‘No Rest for Wicked’ Attend Class Tomorrow” describes Dean Post’s announcement that class would continue through New Year’s Day, ruining many student’s plans to visit home.⁵² This announcement was a surprise due to the previous

⁵⁰ Alvord, “Report of the Dean of Women,” 23.

⁵¹ “Report of the Dean of the College,” *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol XI, No. 7, September 1919, 20.

⁵² “‘No Rest for Wicked’ Attend Class Tomorrow,” *The DePauw Daily*, December 31, 1918, 1.

precedent. Weeks after classes had been resumed, the epidemic was still disrupting the university's academics.

The ability of DePauw to escape the influenza epidemic without a single student death is remarkable, especially when compared to other universities. Amongst a group of eight universities – Princeton University, University of Chicago, Harvard University, Yale University, University of Texas, University of Southern California, and University of Montana - who had S.A.T.C. units during the fall of 1918, DePauw University was the only institution to have a 0% mortality rate. The average mortality rate was 0.5%, but the sample ranged from DePauw's 0% to 2.2% within an S.A.T.C. in Montana.⁵³ DePauw was unique in its experience with the influenza in comparison to many other universities with S.A.T.C. units. The success DePauw had with protecting its service members could be attributed to multiple factors, including the patient's epidemiological status, the lay-out of the infirmaries, or the space provided for the sick and healthy. No matter, the comparison of DePauw's campus to other campuses with S.A.T.C. units from across the country demonstrates the fortune that DePauw felt by not losing any students – or soldiers for that matter – to the influenza epidemic. The adherence to public health measures paid off.

Other college towns did not fair as well as Greencastle. Cornell University is another institution with town and gown dynamic like that of Greencastle and DePauw. Located in Ithaca, New York, Cornell University had close to 900 cases amongst its student population. 35 of those cases resulted in the deaths of students. The university and town benefited from each other during this time, as townspeople helped care for ailing students and the nearby medical

⁵³ G. Dennis Shanks, et. al, "Variable Mortality from the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic During Military Training," *Military Medicine* 181, no. 8 (August 2016): 879.

college students helped take care of sick Ithacans. The Cornell Board of Trustees went as far to state that the “university health facilities ‘would have been in a serious plight’ had it not been for ‘the unselfish labors’ of volunteers from Ithaca and nearby towns”.⁵⁴ With town and gown relations similar to that of Greencastle and DePauw University, the difference in influenza experience is astounding. Cornell and Ithaca alike experienced high rates of death while Greencastle did, and DePauw escaped unscathed. Differences in the timeline of the virus’s arrival and public health measures are responsible for the disparities.

Bringing back the scope more locally, even nearby Bloomington, Indiana and Indiana University had a different experience than Greencastle and DePauw. Indiana University had a similar structural set-up to DePauw University in that the college was shut down from October 20, 1918 to November 4, 1918 and only men serving in the S.A.T.C. were to stay on campus. The women were encouraged to travel home. Indiana University observed three student deaths, which is more than what DePauw experienced and less than the mortality rate of Cornell University.⁵⁵ Indiana University, like DePauw, acted more proactively to prevent severe illness and death from the spread of the influenza virus but still had a low mortality rate.

In comparison with Greencastle’s outcomes, DePauw clearly benefited from its status institutionally. DePauw as a university had control over its students, as opposed to Greencastle’s lack of control of its citizens. DePauw was able to send part of its student population home, spread out the remaining S.A.T.C. troops, and care directly for every ill

⁵⁴ Krishna Ramanujan, “Previous pandemic in 1918 recalled as Cornell plans for possible avian flu threat,” *Cornell Chronicle*, February 7, 2006. <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2006/02/1918-pandemic-recalled-cornell-plans-possible-avian-flu-threat>.

⁵⁵ Dina Kellams, “The flu closes IU,” *Indiana University Archives: Blogging Hoosier History*, November 10, 2011. <https://blogs.libraries.indiana.edu/iubarchives/2011/11/10/the-flu-closes-iu/>.

student within their infirmaries under the eye of a university nurse. DePauw students were also just that – students with little to do but attend class when it was in session or go to drill.

Greencastle, on the other hand, could only attempt to enforce public health policies within its population and was forced to rely upon few health care providers for a large population.

Greencastle citizens also had to go to work to put food on the table. The difference in institutional status – from university to city – combined with proactive public health measures highlights the significance that institutional control can play in response to public health crises.

Conclusion

The plight of Greencastle and DePauw University throughout the harrowing encounter with the influenza epidemic in the fall of 1918 brought tragedy of many sorts. Illness, death, and loss of many kinds – loss of lives, loss of livelihood, and loss of opportunity - were felt. While it would be easy to brush over their experiences as being homogeneous, the two could not have been more different. Greencastle's death rate was devastating, especially when placed next to DePauw University's loss of zero students. DePauw experienced loss of enrollment – particularly within the female population and degradation of scholarship and morale. Is it worth it to ask who had it worse? The university or the town which surrounded it? To consider one a winner over the other seems insensitive and invalidating as the life courses of individuals were forever altered; it is far more important to acknowledge the implications of the college town experience during a public health crisis.

Placed within today's era of the COVID-19 pandemic, the influenza epidemic of 1918 seems all too familiar. Once again, Greencastle and DePauw University have had substantially

different experiences. Disparities come down to adherence to public health policies, infection rate, death rate, and vaccination rate. Parallels between the 1918 experience and the present-day experience, approximately 100 years later, are uncanny. While the COVID-19 virus presents itself very differently regarding the demographics of its victims, Greencastle has still experienced much higher mortality rates in comparison with DePauw. DePauw, though, has followed much more stringent public health protocol. It is important to acknowledge the differences and observe how they have possibly amplified tensions between the town and gown over the past year and a half.

Expanding upon the microcosm of DePauw and Greencastle's experience, public health has been a central concern for college towns across America during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst trying to give university students a proper education, the universities must also follow public health policies and mandates to protect their respective populations, protecting not just the student population or professors but also the townspeople and the most at-risk populations. Universities have chosen to advocate for public health even if it has meant loss of enrollment rates and less economic profit. It is worth noting that university students and townspeople are not homogenous populations. There is a spectrum of adherence to public health policy within the populations. Small, private universities, like DePauw, have benefitted from having the means to control the student population and enforce adherence to public health policy; however, not all educational institutions are able to effectively uphold regulations.

Ultimately, there is much to learn from the 1918 influenza epidemic. The misinformation that created stigma behind the "Spanish influenza" and "Spanish Lady" disease

can be related to the need for Greek letter COVID-19 variants so that different parts of the world are not “othered.” The suicide of Dr. Sudranski, one of the local physicians, demonstrates the impact that burnout and stress can have on the mental health of medical providers, which is an issue currently. Even the lack of adherence to public health measures in 1918 can be correlated with many present-day examples. The irrefutable parallels between the experience of the 1918 influenza epidemic and COVID-19 in Greencastle, Indiana stress the importance of learning from the past as well as question what else could have been forgotten regarding public health. The revival of scholarly focus on pandemics has infiltrated curriculum, research, and academic pursuits of students and professors. Encouraging a scholarly focus on public health within history, and more broadly, the humanities, demonstrates great potential for making a difference in the medical and scientific communities.

Works Cited

Alvord, Katherine Sprague. “Report of the Dean of Women.” *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol VI, No. 7. June 6, 1919.

Alvord, Katherine Sprague. “Report of the Dean of Women.” *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol V, No. 7. September 1918.

Arceo, Austin. “The Influenza Epidemic: A Memorable Impact Pushed Out of Memory?.” Greencastle, Indiana: DePauw University, 2006.

Armed Services YMCA. “Our History.” Accessed November 2, 2021.

<https://www.asymca.org/history>.

Barry, John M. “How the Horrific 1918 Flu Spread Across America.” *Smithsonian Magazine*: November 2017. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/journal-plague-year>

180965222/.

Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018.

Baughman, John J. *Our Past, Their Present: Historical Essays on Putnam County, Indiana*. Greencastle, Indiana: Putnam County Museum, 2008.

"D'Pauw Wabash will Play in Crawfordsville." *Herald-Democrat*. November 22, 1918.

"DePauw Beats Wabash 28-6: Giants Slow Up." *Herald-Democrat*. November 29, 1918.

"DePauw Rallies to Win Contest." *Herald-Democrat*. November 8, 1918.

DePauw University Archives. "Historical Faculty and Staff Directory." 2019.

Eyler, John M. "The State of Science, Microbiology, and Vaccines Circa 1918." *Public Health Reports* 125, no. 3 (2010): 27-36.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862332/>.

"First 'Flu' Mask Appears on Square." *Herald-Democrat*. November 29, 1918, 2.

"Four Influenza Cases Reported in the City." *Indianapolis News*. September 30, 1918.

Google Maps. "Directions from Indianapolis, Indiana to Greencastle, Indiana." Accessed September 30, 2021.

Gross, George. "Annual Report of the President to the Board of Trustees and Visitors of DePauw University." *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol XI, No. 7, June 10, 1919.

Herald-Democrat, October 11, 1918.

"Influenza is Fatal to High School Student." *Herald-Democrat*. October 11, 1918.

"Influenza is Fatal to Two." *Herald-Democrat*. October 11, 1918.

"Influenza Situation is Better." *Herald-Democrat*. October 11, 1918.

Kellams, Dina. "The flu closes IU." *Indiana University Archives: Blogging Hoosier History*, November 10, 2011. <https://blogs.libraries.indiana.edu/iubarchives/2011/11/10/the-flu-closes-iu/>.

Manhart, George B. *DePauw Through the Years: Volume I, Indiana Asbury University, 1837-1884, DePauw University, 1884-1919*. Chicago, Illinois: Lakeside Press, 1962.

"Minor Pickett Dead of Flu." *Herald-Democrat*. November 29, 1918.

The Mirage of 1919: Official Yearbook of DePauw University. Anderson, Indiana: Herald Publishing Co., 1919.

"'No Rest for Wicked' Attend Class Tomorrow." *The DePauw Daily*. December 31, 1918.

"Orders Schools Closed." *Herald-Democrat*, October 11, 1918.

"Physician Ends Life By Suicide." *Herald-Democrat*. November 11, 1918, 6.

"Protective Steps Taken by Mayor." *Indianapolis News*. September 27, 1918.

"Public Meetings are Forbidden." *Indianapolis News*. October 7, 1918.

"Purdue-DePauw Game Saturday." *Herald-Democrat*. October 11, 1918.

Putnam County Health Department death records, 1918 – 1919.

Ramanujan, Krishna. "Previous pandemic in 1918 recalled as Cornell plans for possible avian flu threat." *Cornell Chronicle*, February 7, 2006.
<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2006/02/1918-pandemic-recalled-cornell-plans-possible-avian-flu-threat>.

"Report of the Dean of the College." *DePauw University Bulletin*, Third Series, Vol XI, No. 7. September 1919.

"Reports Sixteen Burials." *Herald-Democrat*. November 8, 1918.

"Rules for Combatting Influenza Epidemic." *Herald-Democrat*. October 11, 1918.

Shanks, G. Dennis et. al. "Variable Mortality from the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic During

Military Training." *Military Medicine* 181, no. 8 (August 2016): 878-882.

<https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED-D-15-00124>.

Taubenberger, Jeffrey K. and David M. Morens. "1918 Influenza: the Mother of All Pandemics."

Emerging Infectious Diseases 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 15-22.

<https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1201.050979>.

"To Quarentine D'Pauw Girls." *Herald-Democrat*. November 1, 1918.

Trilla, Antoni. Guillem Trilla, Carolyn Daer. "The 1918 'Spanish Flu' in Spain." *Clinical Infectious*

Diseases Volume 47, no. 5: September 1, 2008. 668-673.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/590567>.

United States Census Bureau. "Decennial Census of Population and Housing." 1920. Accessed

November 1, 2021.