

Fall 12-18-2015

It Came Across the Plains: the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Rural Nebraska

Kristin Watkins

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

<http://unmc.libwizard.com/DCFeedback>

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/etd>

 Part of the [History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Watkins, Kristin, "It Came Across the Plains: the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Rural Nebraska" (2015). *Theses & Dissertations*. 42.
<https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/etd/42>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@UNMC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNMC. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@unmc.edu.

**IT CAME ACROSS THE PLAINS:
THE 1918 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC IN RURAL NEBRASKA**

By

Kristin A. Watkins

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
the University of Nebraska Graduate College
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Medical Sciences Interdepartmental Area
Graduate Program

Internal Medicine

Under the supervision of Professor and Assistant Dean of Special Projects
Robert S. Wigton, MD

University of Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, Nebraska

December, 2015

Supervisory Committee:

Virginia Aita, PhD

JoAnn Carrigan, PhD

M. Patricia Leuschen, PhD

Laura Bilek, PhD

Ted Kooser, LittD

Philip W. Smith, MD

**IT CAME ACROSS THE PLAINS:
THE 1918 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC IN RURAL NEBRASKA**

Kristin A. Watkins, PhD

University of Nebraska, 2015

Supervisor: Robert S. Wigton, MD

The purpose of this historical case study was to understand and describe rural community experiences during the 1918 influenza pandemic in Nebraska.

Examining the rural experience in Nebraska during the 1918 influenza pandemic provided a new level of insight into the differences and similarities between the urban and rural experience. As related by a detailed study of Omaha during the 1918 pandemic, the community was devastated by disease. Despite public ordinances and health department warnings, streetcars ran at capacity, parades were held to raise money for war bonds, and the annual Aksarben Coronation took place. Cases of flu were too numerous to count as physicians and nurses were overwhelmed.

The experience of rural communities in October through December of 1918 was rich, humorous, and tragic. Some communities, like Wayne and Red Cloud, had less disease. It is clear that rural location did not provide protection from the virus. Lack of access to basic services like supportive health care may have led to more deaths in counties lacking infrastructure such as hospitals, as was the case in both Cherry and Scottsbluff counties. Geographic isolation did not keep the virus away, nor would being in a crowd guarantee illness. Often multiple families died together and loss was all around. Public grief was palpable. Physicians and nurses were exhausted and over worked, at times breaking down at

the tragedy they saw. Amidst all the horror there was some humor, as Santa got arrested for breaking the quarantine and well-meaning children raised the money to pay his fine.

The most over-arching conclusion based on the evidence from this study is that nothing can completely protect you from influenza, and some rural communities may have a false sense of security if they think influenza cannot reach them. This study shows that influenza can and will spread anywhere geographically, even to the most remote locations. Few things can stop pathogens in pursuit of infection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction/Background.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: Nebraska.....	16
CHAPTER THREE: Wayne.....	29
CHAPTER FOUR: Red Cloud.....	38
CHAPTER FIVE: Anselmo.....	48
CHAPTER SIX: Valentine.....	55
CHAPTER SEVEN: Gering/Scottsbluff.....	66
CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion.....	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	82
FIGURE BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	92

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE:

- Figure 1:** Diagram of an influenza virus.....7
- Figure 2:** Community populations in Nebraska: 1910 U.S. Census.....10
- Figure 3:** Map of study communities.....11

CHAPTER TWO:

- Figure 4:** Geographic location of Fort Riley and Camp Funston, Kansas.....17
- Figure 5:** Timeline of Events.....28

CHAPTER THREE:

- Figure 6:** Main Street, Wayne, Nebraska, 1907.....29
- Figure 7:** Map of Wayne County.....30
- Figure 8:** Uncle Sam’s advice on flu.....35

CHAPTER FOUR:

- Figure 9:** Main intersection, Red Cloud, Nebraska, 1909.....38
- Figure 10:** Map of Webster County.....39
- Figure 11:** Red Cross nurse.....43

CHAPTER FIVE:

- Figure 12:** Main Street, Anselmo, Nebraska, 1905.....48
- Figure 13:** Map of Custer County.....48
- Figure 14:** Declaration from *The Enterprise*.....50

CHAPTER SIX:

- Figure 15:** Map of Cherry County.....55
- Figure 16:** Main Street, Valentine, Nebraska, 1911.....56

CHAPTER SEVEN:

- Figure 17:** Map of Scotts Bluff County.....66
- Figure 18:** Broadway Street, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 1900.....67
- Figure 19:** Old Main Street, Gering, Nebraska, no date.....67

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

THESIS: The purpose of this historical case study is to understand and describe rural community experiences during the 1918 influenza pandemic in Nebraska.

As far as we know, viruses have existed as long as life on earth, coming up from the ectoplasm. They have always affected human beings and continue to play a significant role in the whole of human health. At one time or another, all of us will contract a viral infection, no matter how hard we try to the contrary. Likely it will be something minor like rhinovirus, the common cold. Sometimes, even with vaccination and good hand hygiene, we may get influenza. Influenza is defined as, “a highly contagious and often epidemic viral disease characterized by fever, prostration, muscular aches and pains, and inflammation of the respiratory passages.”¹ The body of information surrounding the influenza virus is vast – everything from its viral characteristics and molecular structure to the history of epidemic waves coming year after year across centuries. By studying historic information about influenza, we hope to gain vital knowledge about how to combat the disease in contemporary times.

The CDC estimates that anywhere from 3,000 to 49,000 persons die in the United States each year from influenza.² However, in all the years of recorded human history, one year in particular stands out for the flu: 1918. Worldwide mortality from the 1918 influenza pandemic was estimated in the 1920s at about 21.5 million. In the early 1990s, a seminal

¹ Influenza. Retrieved 3/7/2015, 2015, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/influenza?s=t>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Estimates of deaths associated with seasonal influenza---United States, 1976-2007,” *MMWR* 59, no. 33 (2010): 1057.

study by K. David Patterson and Gerald Pyle, re-assessed mortality figures as researchers suspected under-reporting. Their study included inquiry into the major geographical pathways of spread and more fully examined demographic consequences of the lethal autumn wave than had the study done in the 1920s and revised the world's death toll to be more in the neighborhood of 30 million deaths from influenza or complications of influenza.³ A more recent study increases the estimate to 50 million deaths with the caveat, "it must be acknowledged that even this vast figure may be substantially lower than the real toll, perhaps as 100 % understated."⁴

In the United States alone, the 1918 flu is estimated to have caused between 550,000 - 675,000 deaths. At that time, the population of the U.S. was approximately 103 million, and the influenza mortality rate for the 1918 pandemic was estimated anywhere from 2.5 - 6.5%.⁵ This was roughly five times the number of U.S. soldiers killed in combat during World War I, and more than the total combat losses from World War I, II, Korea, and Vietnam combined. The loss of life was so profound that it depressed the average life expectancy rate by ten years.⁶ The disease's high mortality rate is likely due to secondary infections caused by bacterial pneumonia, but there is no definitive evidence. Additionally, there is a "cytokine storm" theory about the 1918 pandemic; that the youngest and healthiest died because of

³ K.D. Patterson, G.F. Pyle, "The geography and mortality of the 1918 influenza pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65, no. 1 (1991): 5.

⁴ Niall Johnson, Juergen Mueller, "Updating the accounts: global mortality of the 1918-1920 "Spanish" influenza pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 76, no. 1 (2002): 105.

⁵ Johnson, 111; Patterson, 15; Nancy Bristow, *American Pandemic: Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3; Jeffery K. Taubenberger, Ann H. Reid, Amy E. Craft, Karen E. Bijwaard, Thomas G. Fanning, "Initial genetic characterization of the 1918 "Spanish" influenza virus," *Science* 275, no. 5307 (1997) 1793.

⁶ Patterson, 17; Taubenberger, "Genetic," 1793.

their bodies' own defense mechanism; Killer T Cells, annihilated them. These T cells attack viruses that penetrate the body's cells. When they kill the virus, they kill the cell as well. Young, healthy adults usually have strong immune systems; during the 1918 pandemic, it is theorized the T cells fought so hard they liquefied the lungs, filling them with blood and ultimately exterminating the host.

In 1918, the scientific and medical community did not know of the existence of viruses. Bacteria had been discovered in the 1600s by Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, but they are very different from viruses.⁷ In particular, bacteria can be susceptible to antibiotics, medicine we can use to rid ourselves of microscopic pathogens and cure illness. The first antibiotic was not discovered until the mid-1940s, at the end of World War II, long after the flu pandemic. However, since most viruses are not susceptible to antibiotics, prevention is the best way to avoid a virus. None of this was known in 1918, not because the scientists in the world weren't looking; they were. These nuances of microbiologic method were yet to be known or understood.

The flu likely started propagating in the early spring of 1918,⁸ the end of the normal flu season in the northern hemisphere. Influenza traveled from Camp Funston, Kansas, a division of Fort Riley, as an invisible enemy in the bodies of soldiers headed off to the World War I battlefield in Europe. This period of time would eventually be called the "first wave" by some; it foreshadowed what was to come in later months. In Europe, the disease incubated, grew stronger, and then exploded, killing far more than the weapons of war, moving rapidly through the battlefield trenches, spreading among the Kaiser's men as well as

⁷ Schierbeek, A. (1962). Antoni van Leeuwenhoek. *JAMA*, 181(3), 274-274.

⁸ John Barry, *The Great Influenza: the epic story of the deadliest plague in history* (New York: Penguin Group USA, 2005), 169.

the Allied troops. The disease affected civilians as well, infecting approximately one-fifth of the world's population, and killing 2% of those infected.⁹

In light of recurring outbreaks and various strains of influenza, particularly the highly virulent H5N1 (aka, bird flu), with a mortality case rate around 58%,¹⁰ the history of a pandemic with such a significantly high morbidity as the one in 1918 may provide us with insight as to cause of spread, factors that exacerbate that spread, as well as any non-pharmaceutical interventions that may have provided relief or aid in slowing the dispersion of the disease.¹¹ Public health authorities will not be able to stop the virus, but the ability to slow the disease and disperse the surge of patients onto a more gradual bell curve with less strain on hospital systems will be critical. Additionally, contemporary studies of the 1918 pandemic in cities show that layered, non-pharmaceutical interventions can be effective in slowing the spread of disease if implemented early enough and adhered to by the community members.¹²

Robert Webster, one of the world's foremost virologists studying influenza, expressed his dismay that the mild nature of the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic bred disbelief in the general public regarding the deadly potential of influenza. In August of 2010, he gave a talk

⁹ Patterson, 15; Johnson, 108.

¹⁰ *Cumulative number of confirmed human cases of avian influenza A(H5N1) reported to WHO*, table, World Health Organization (2015) http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/EN_GIP_20150106CumulativeNumberH5N1cases_corrected.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 2/15/2015).

¹¹ H. Markel, A.M. Stern, J.A. Navarro, J.R. Michalsen, A.S. Montas, C. Giovanni, "Nonpharmaceutical influenza mitigation strategies, US communities, 1918-1920 pandemic," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12, no. 12 (2006): 1963; H. Markel, H.B. Lipman, J.A. Navarro, A. Sloan, J.R. Michalsen, A.M. Stern, M.S. Cetron, "Nonpharmaceutical interventions implemented by US cities during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic," *JAMA* 298, no. 6 (2007) 654; Richard J. Hatchett, Carter E. Mecher, Marc Lipstitch, "Public health interventions and epidemic intensity during the 1918 influenza pandemic," *PNAS* 104, no. 18 (2007) 7582.

¹² Markel, "Nonpharmaceutical interventions," 654.

entitled “Is influenza playing lullabies?” at a conference of the Omaha Chapter of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and the Nebraska Infection Control Network. Webster is one of the few virologists in the world having studied both the 2009 H1N1 virus, and the 1918 H1N1 virus. His talk described the differences in virulence between the two, with the 1918 extremely severe and the 2009 virus exceptionally mild. He warned we should continue to be vigilant in our examination of influenza and its history, as there is still much to learn;¹³ “the entire gene sequence is unlikely to reveal the secrets of the high pathogenicity of the 1918 Spanish virus.”¹⁴

In seeking lessons from the 1918 influenza pandemic, researchers have predominantly looked at communities of 60,000 people or larger.¹⁵ In rural communities, the service infrastructure is very different; there is no long-standing bureaucracy for organizing and delivering services, including those needed in a pandemic. Service areas are much larger than the immediate rural community, making transportation an issue, and cultural expectations and norms (how services are accepted) can be different from those in cities. In rural areas one normally sees a personal and household independence theme.¹⁶ David Wishart, a University of Nebraska- Lincoln geography professor, and editor of the Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, states of rural Nebraskans, “ they are proud to live in this land that was too harsh for others,” and that their dignity exists in part due to their strong

¹³ Robert Webster, “Is influenza singing us lullabies?” (lecture, Nebraska Infection Control Conference, August 10, 2010).

¹⁴ Robert Webster, “1918 Spanish influenza: The secrets remain elusive,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 96, no. 4 (1999): 1165.

¹⁵ Kenneth Staley, “Biodefense Policy: Whitehouse Homeland Security Counsel - Grand Rounds Presentation” (lecture and luncheon, University of Nebraska Medical Center, 2008).

¹⁶ Keith Mueller, (email correspondence, University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health, 2008).

attachment to the land.¹⁷ This research examines factors of both the rural and urban condition, for comparison and contrast, and could help public health planners devise geographically appropriate education for contemporary pandemic policy.

It is recognized in pandemic influenza planning that a vaccine for any new viral strain would take 6-12 months to develop, as it did with H1N1 in 2009.¹⁸ Antivirals are both in short supply and not certain to be effective against a particular strain of influenza. Thus preventive efforts have focused on community mitigation strategies such as social distancing, school closings, and cancelling public gatherings. Social distancing is defined as increasing space between people; in a community that means no gatherings of groups of people, schools are closed, and many events are cancelled.¹⁹ Because of the lack of recent experience with a lethal influenza, planning efforts have drawn heavily from the historical response to the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic in large U.S. cities.²⁰ Historical analysis has shown that large cities using social distancing measures sustained lower influenza mortality. Similar historical analyses of smaller US communities in the 1918-1919 pandemic will be of value to future rural preparedness.

In a 1918 article in the *British Medical Journal*, there is a brief discussion of the benefit of school closure during the pandemic. It is noted that there is little benefit in urban areas to closing schools, except for a few days for cleaning and disinfection. However, rural areas see significant reduction in the spread of influenza if schools are closed, as schools are

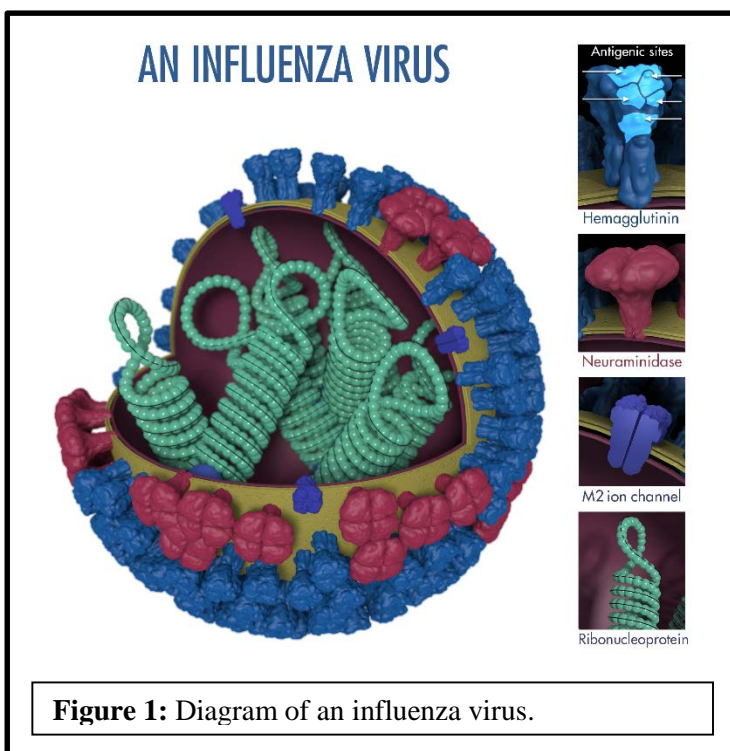
¹⁷ Becky Gailey, "Understanding Nebraska: Pride, Geography and Self-Deprecation" *Strategic Discussions for Nebraska* 2, 26-27.

¹⁸ CDC, "Estimates," 1057.

¹⁹ Centers for...

²⁰ Markel, "Nonpharmaceutical interventions," 644.

often the center for disseminating the virus in rural areas, as they are one of the few formal gatherings places.²¹



THE DISEASE:

Influenza A is a highly communicable illness transmitted by droplets through the air. Droplet differs from airborne transmission; the particles are larger and are usually most powerful within three feet of the infected person's dispersion. In contrast, an airborne disease like tuberculosis has a much greater

reach due to airborne transmission, not requiring victims to be in the same room with the infected, as the droplets can be carried on air currents long distances.²² In the United States, 5 – 20% of the population contract the flu each year.²³ As with other similar viruses, influenza is a simple structure, consisting of only ten genes. The virus has tiny hooks on its surface that latch onto a person's respiratory system when exposed via droplet. Coughs and sneezes are efficient ways the virus spreads, traveling as far as six feet on tiny droplets. Flu viruses can

²¹ "French Advice on the prevention of influenza mortality," *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3018 (1918) 496.

²² Jane D. Siegel, Emily Rhinehart, Marguerite Jackson, Linda Chiarello, the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee, *2007 Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007) 16-17.

²³ "Seasonal Flu," Flu.gov (2015) http://www.flu.gov/about_the_flu/seasonal/index.html (accessed 2/15/2015).

also be acquired from fomites, surfaces where the virus can live for a time. Doorknobs, cell phones, and keyboards are examples of common fomites. Carl Zimmer, *New York Times* science writer, describes the process of being infected with influenza this way, “[a]s flu viruses spread from cell to cell in the lining of the airway, they leave destruction in their wake. The mucus and cells lining the airway get destroyed, as if the flu viruses were a lawn mower cutting grass.”²⁴ Hand washing and staying at least three feet in distance from others can help people avoid those identified as sick. However, influenza enters the body quietly; a person can be contagious anywhere from 24 – 48 hours prior to showing symptoms, with contagion continuing anywhere from five to seven days after symptoms emerge.²⁵

AIMS/RATIONALE:

The purpose of this historical case study is to understand and describe the rural community experience during the 1918 influenza pandemic in Nebraska. This inquiry focuses on themes of public health preparedness, especially planning for incidence of disease, response to disease, and types of non-pharmaceutical interventions used, including isolation and quarantine, social distancing, mask wearing, and other regulations such as no spitting or sharing of cups. Additionally, narratives of town members, physicians, nurses, and postmasters all become part of the story. In the cities of Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska, crowding and travel, as well as non-compliance with the ban on public gatherings, allowed the disease to reach out-of-control proportions. In rural areas, the motivators of community action were different, and non-compliance usually entailed local politicians trying to break

²⁴ Carl Zimmer, *A Planet of Viruses* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), 16.

²⁵ Flu.gov, 2015.

quarantine to pursue their campaigns, with residents protesting and sticking to the quarantine. The flu changed and shaped their lives; many refused to discuss the horror of it, to the point of seeming as if there were a national forgetting.²⁶ As with the case of rural Japan, rural Nebraska had high morbidity, from the *Red Cloud Chief*, a local newspaper, “everyone in and around Inavale has, or has had, the flu,” but in some areas few deaths.²⁷ In the most remote areas the death toll appears much higher, but no health records exist. The mortality toll in sparsely populated areas was personal for an entire county or region; in most cases all community members were known to one another, and often played a significant role in each other’s lives.

This research examined the influenza virus and its movement across rural communities of the state of Nebraska, its impact, and the influenza narrative: the stories told by those whose lives were affected directly and indirectly by the pandemic. The same “case” will be examined at six locations throughout the state, representing a cross section of industries, geography, and local resources.

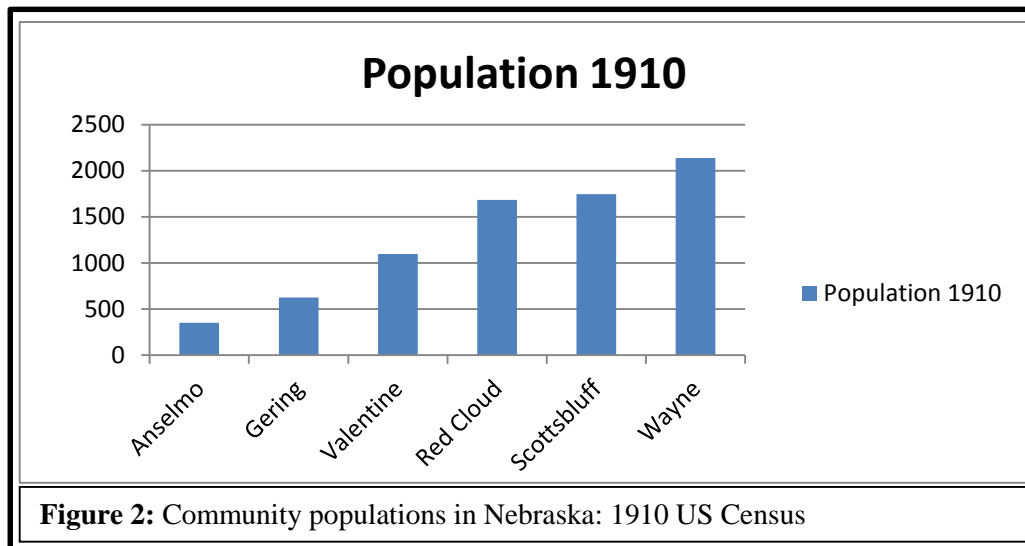
METHODS:

The study utilizes non-probability sampling applied systematically to a 1917 gazetteer map of Nebraska that shows railroad lines and the 1910 census of Nebraska. The selection criteria for the representative sample communities were population size and geographic location. The census defines urban areas as communities of 2,500 or more; it does not define

²⁶ Alfred Crosby, *America’s forgotten pandemic: the influenza of 1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 315.

²⁷ H. Nishiura, G. Chowell, “Rurality and pandemic influenza: geographic heterogeneity in the risks of infection and death in Kanagawa, Japan (1918–1919),” *Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association* 121, no. 1284 (2008): 3305; *Red Cloud Chief*, October 17, 1918.

rural areas. Based on census numbers, only communities smaller than 2,500 were selected to examine; they range from 350 – 2,300 people.²⁸

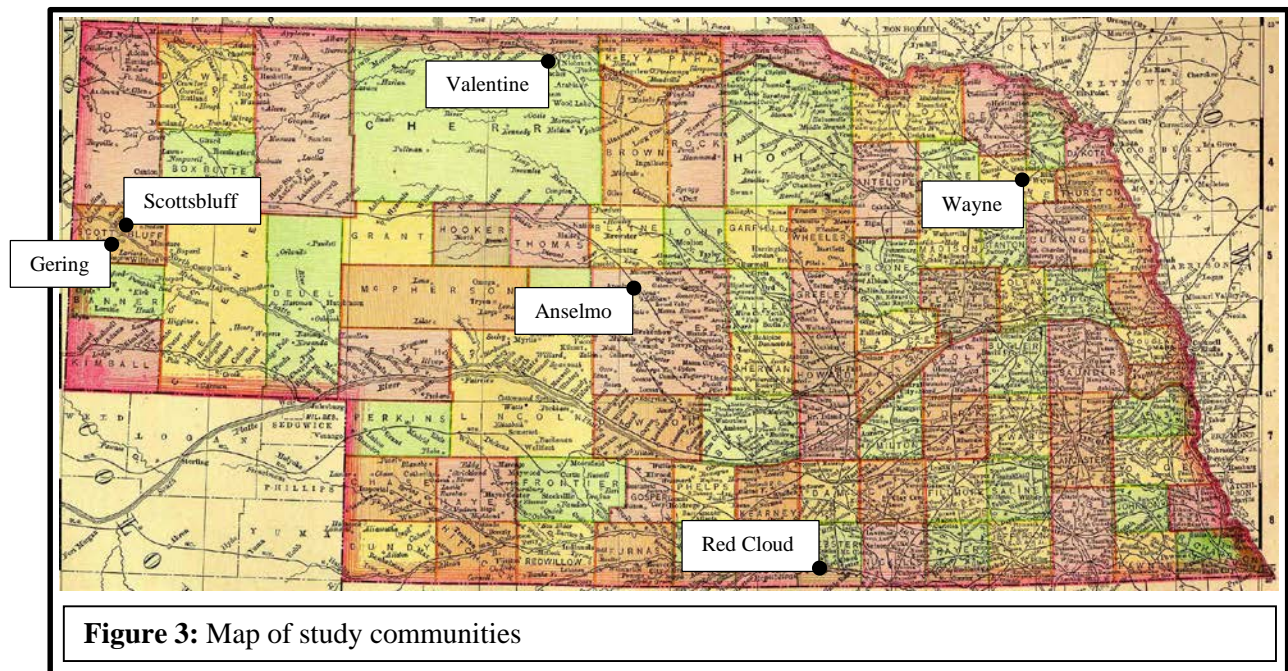


To select towns, all communities under 2,500 were identified on the 1917 Gazetteer Map, and places selected were as evenly spaced across the state as possible. A total of six communities were chosen; within the group one case is “paired:” Scottsbluff and Gering will be examined to look at the adjacent towns and the responses of each compared to the other. Red Cloud was selected as it fits both the selection criteria and was the home of Willa Cather, who won the Pulitzer Prize for her book *One of Ours*, dealing with the tragedy of World War I and a Nebraska soldier. It has one chapter about the flu, based on the journal of Dr. Frederick Sweeney, a physician who tended to Cather for influenza in 1919. Serving as a physician on a troop ship bound for the European battlefield, he encountered an unpleasant outbreak of influenza amongst the troops, and his observations clearly affected Cather, who filled a chapter of her novel with his insights into suffering from the disease.²⁹ (She

²⁸ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 17.

²⁹ Julie McDonald, “Willa Cather North by Northeast,” Willa Cather Archive (Lincoln, NE: UNL 2003) <http://cather.unl.edu/community.tours.jaffrey.html> (accessed February 15, 2015).

published “Roll Call on the Prairies” in 1919, which glorified the spirit of rural citizens and their hard work ethic and what they gave up for the war effort, but contained no mention of the flu situation in Red Cloud or anywhere else). All six of the rural communities are on railroad lines; in the case of Anselmo, it was created by two railroads to be a resting spot for their workers. The communities, geographically from left to right (west to east), are: Gering, Scottsbluff, Valentine, Anselmo, Red Cloud, and Wayne.



Communities were selected for their different economic factors: Scottsbluff and Gering had ranching and sugar beet farming; Valentine and Anselmo, had ranching and potato farming; Wayne had long been the center of poultry for the state, Red Cloud farmed different crops. All had railroad driven commerce.

From preliminary research it became apparent that between October 1 – December 31, 1918, many newspapers had daily articles about the flu, as well as extensive flu-related obituaries. Sometimes these described the circumstances surrounding the death of community members from flu or pneumonia, and at times, elaborate funerals despite the ban

on public gatherings. To keep a manageable scope, this historic narrative is limited to October 1, 1918 – December 31, 1918. This focuses the time frame of the occurrence, in addition to limiting the geography and population size for the selected communities. This time frame was selected to give a “slice of life” perspective of what happened in rural Nebraska during the worst of the epidemic, when the most people were sick in the United States, as well as when the disease was required to be reported by the state and Federal government. Reports from the state physicians meeting on December 17, 1918, gave a consensus of 2,807 deaths for Nebraska in 1918 due to influenza. The number of cases as reported in the February 1919 edition of *The Nebraska State Medical Journal* was estimated at anywhere between 25,000 – 30,000 throughout the state for the same time period, with the caveat that physicians understood this to be a gross underestimate; more likely there were twice that many cases.³⁰ Lacking comprehensive sources of disease reporting for the period, historians have been reluctant to estimate a morbidity rate for the United States. Alfred Crosby provides the estimate of 25% for the U.S., with a 2-3% estimated mortality rate. His conclusions are widely accepted as the standard and will be used as a benchmark.³¹

My research was conducted using different primary sources to investigate rural community perspectives and epidemic circumstances, including newspapers, personal letters, physician notes, and journal articles from the period. Articles from the *American Journal of Public Health*, the *Nebraska Medical Journal*, the *British Medical Journal*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* were all examined. Nearly all newspapers were accessed on microfilm from the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) archives. Some

³⁰ WH Wherry, “Regular meeting Omaha-Douglas County Medical Society,” *The Nebraska State Medical Journal* IV, no. 2 (1919): 37.

³¹ Crosby, *America's*, 315.

communities had multiple newspapers, offering diverse perspectives. The newspapers include both daily and weekly editions. Additionally, events reported in the *Lincoln Evening State Journal*, were used to validate and compare information reported in rural newspapers. Events, such as the state-wide quarantine, were fact-checked with independent sources.

Secondary sources included more recently published journal articles, publications from the CDC, articles from community archives, historical societies, and a lengthy list of books on the 1918 pandemic. The books predominantly focus on either the urban or the military experience. The most significant books include: Alfred Crosby's *America's Forgotten Pandemic* (a 2003 re-issue of his 1976 book *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*), John Barry's *The Great Influenza* (2005), and the most recent addition to the flu narrative, Nancy Bristow's *American Pandemic* (2012). All works provide a global and urban perspective; glaringly absent is the rural narrative.

Additionally, the findings were compared to Gary Gernhart's 1998 University of Nebraska at Omaha Master's Thesis, *A Forgotten Enemy: Omaha Encounters the 1918 Influenza Pandemic*. This thesis is the only known historical study of the pandemic in Nebraska, and presents the urban situation. John Barry and other authors corroborate Gernhart's findings when examining additional urban areas. Gerhart's thesis was included as a source for the University of Michigan's website "Influenza Encyclopedia" <http://www.influenzaarchive.org/index.html> a digital encyclopedia that examines 50 U.S. cities and their responses to the pandemic.

This analysis scrutinized many aspects of the pandemic's social impact; particular themes surfaced, including isolation and quarantine (especially the ban on public gatherings), non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., mask wearing, no spitting or sharing of cups, school

closings), home remedies, and advertisements for therapeutics. Medical remedies in print advertisements were common in newspapers in both rural and urban areas. There is a general assumption that the rural response will have some differences from the urban response, so a comparison will be important to assess whether that assumption is correct.

SIGNIFICANCE/IMPLICATIONS:

Though this research is a case study, it is a historical narrative and as such is different from other types of qualitative research. Of keenest interest is the examination of rural life and how it affected the spread of the virus and the morbidity and mortality of the communities.

In addition to providing insight into public health preparedness for rural communities, the research fills a gap in the history of medicine in Nebraska and the Midwest. The influenza narrative provides legacy knowledge and lessons learned to examine planning priorities for the present day in rural areas anywhere in the world.

Nebraska consists of nearly 77,000 square miles, and, as of 2014, had a population of nearly 1.9 million people. At present, almost 70% of the population is contained within two cities, Omaha and Lincoln, leaving an enormous amount of space throughout which to spread the remaining people. On average there are 23.8 Nebraskans per square mile, significantly less than the U.S. average of 87.4 people per square mile.³² The historic experiences of these rural populations, aside from being inherently interesting in their own right, provide clues to understanding how to design appropriate medical and public health preparedness services in

³² U.S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts – Nebraska," U.S. Census Bureau (Washington, D.C.: 2024) <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/POP060210/31.00> (accessed February 15, 2015).

today's world, and to meet the current needs of these areas during an infectious disease outbreak such as influenza.

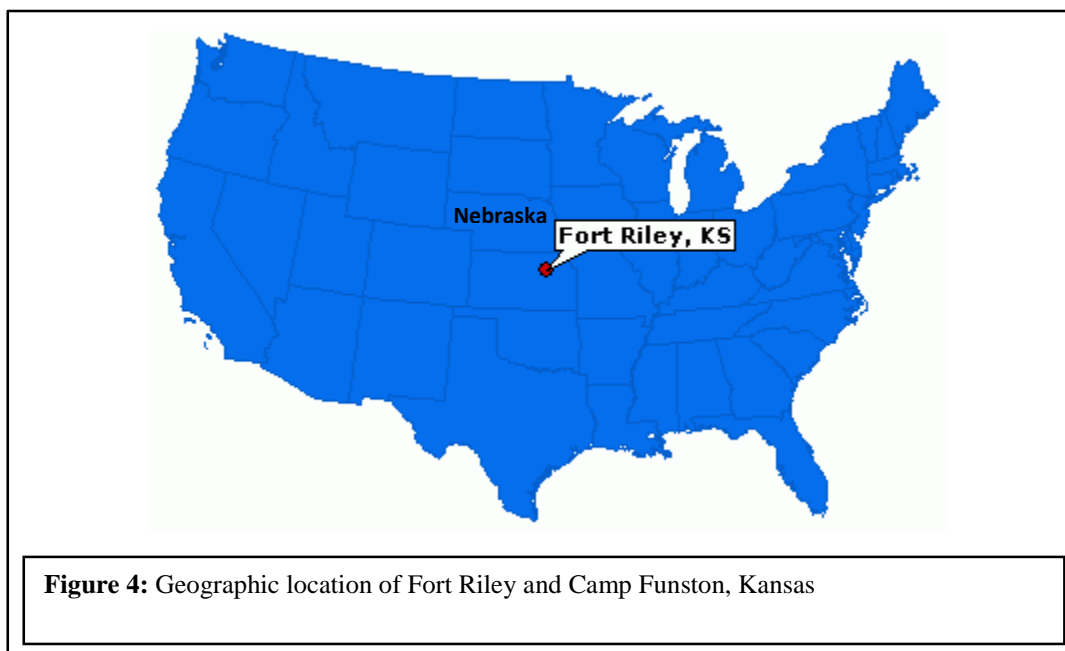
CHAPTER TWO: NEBRASKA

FLU ORIGINS

In 1918, the world was ravaged by the deadliest influenza pandemic in recorded human history, often referred to as the “Spanish Flu,” primarily because Spain was the first country to report on the epidemic.¹ Due to the conflict of World War I, many countries, including the United States, placed a moratorium on “bad” news; even after the disease began infecting a significant portion of the population, cases of influenza continued to be under-reported. To suppress information, in 1917 the United States legislated the Committee on Public Information, also known as the Creel Committee. President Wilson attempted to create a unified nation in support for what he dubbed the People’s War. As the main media outlet, the press was the focus of censorship efforts. Wilson faced the challenge of nearly one hundred and fifty years of the rights of the First Amendment, Freedom of the Press.² As this research study shows, the American people would not allow their voices to be stifled.

¹ Gary Gernhardt, “A forgotten enemy: PHS’s fight against the 1918 influenza pandemic,” *Public Health Reports* 114, no.6, 559.

² Cedrick Larson, James Mock, “The lost files of the Creel Committee of 1917-1919,” *the Public Opinion Quarterly* 3, no. 1, 5-8.



The most feasible origin theory for the pandemic is that it began in a bucolic rural camp preparing soldiers for cavalry service in the U.S. Military. During World War I, Fort Riley, Kansas, added a large cantonment five miles to the east called Camp Funston. It housed an additional 30,000 – 50,000 troops, and was created as part of a Federal initiative to train massive numbers of men. The military installation was located in north central Kansas, near the geographic center of the United States. Sparsely populated since the Civil War, Fort Riley came alive during World War I; the enormous army cavalry training compound spread out over twenty-thousand acres. It was full of men, horses, military machinery, and materiel. Troops were brought there from all across the country to train on horseback and prepare for the new trench warfare. They learned other modern war tactics, as technology such as tanks, and mustard gas arrived for the first time on the Western Front. Twenty-six-thousand men were stationed in Kansas; between the men and the hoof stock, they were making a lot of manure.³

³ Adolph A. Hoeling, *The Great Epidemic* (Little, Brown and Company, 1961), 11.

In early March of 1918, a dust storm kicked up in Kansas. It fulminated for three hours with gale force winds, turning all the manure from the livestock into a fine dust coating everything. After the storm passed, the encampment had to be cleaned; and the troops were armed with new weapons: buckets and brooms. Troops cleaned even as the winds continued to howl. By late evening, the camp was back to normal. There is no evidence to directly link the manure storm to what happened next. Both the storm and influenza involved respiratory distress, and manure is often a vehicle for disease; however no direct evidence of causality was established. A few days after the storm, disease began to spread through the cantonment.⁴

It is not detailed how many chickens or pigs were present at the Fort. These species act as hosts for influenza viruses that have the capability of infecting humans, and their manure would have been present in the storm. We will never know if the virus jumped from these species into the soldiers, but analysis of nucleotide sequences provides evidence that it likely entered humans about 1912.⁵ It is still unknown why its virulence grew over the next few years.⁶

Camp Funston had a 3,068-bed hospital that was a conglomerate of buildings constructed of limestone, brick, and clapboard. It had never approached being filled to capacity. In early March of 1918, two days after the manure storm, troops began to show up at the hospital. They had similar symptoms: fever, sore throat, headache, and muscular aches.

⁴ Hoeling, 12-13.

⁵ Webster, R. G. (1999). "1918 Spanish influenza: The secrets remain elusive." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 96(4), 1164.

⁶ Webster, R. G. (2010, 8/10/2010). *Is influenza singing us lullabies?* Paper presented at the Nebraska Infection Control Network/Association for Professionals in Infection Control Annual Conference, Omaha, NE.

On March 11, a steady stream of men began to pour into the hospital; by noon 107 patients had been admitted. Colonel Edward Schneider, head of the hospital and presiding surgeon, dictated consistent notes for each patient, noting fevers over 100, red mucus membranes, and bronchial inflammation, tell-tale signs of influenza, his ultimate diagnosis. By the end of the week his hospital recorded 522 cases; and after the virus had worked its way through the ranks, 1,127 soldiers had fallen ill. Forty-six died, all attributed to a secondary infection, bacterial pneumonia.⁷

Later that spring the military began to funnel men from Fort Riley and other bases over to the European battlefield. They were loaded into troop ships, often overcrowded; soldiers began to infect one another. It was milder then; not many died, but many got sick, and they carried the virus with them to the western front of World War I.⁸ U.S. troops landed in Brest, France in May 1918, and with them landed influenza. Its fevers began to burn through the French ranks, increasing in virulence as it moved through bodies; passed on again and again. By May, the British troops were suffering as well, and in June they took the disease to England with them. Cases were still mild, and most recovered. The Allies' greatest concern was that the disease would hinder the men's ability to fight.⁹

By July, the flu had made its way around the world and was on its way back. All parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and even Iceland were reporting the flu, popularly termed "la grippe." The symptoms of seasonal influenza, as recounted by

⁷ Hoeling, 14-16.

⁸ John Barry, *The Great Influenza: the epic story of the deadliest plague in history* (Penguin Group USA, 2005), 169-170.

⁹ Hoeling, 16-17; Barry, 170.

physician H.H. Waite of Lincoln in 1918, included, “tenderness along the back, with shivering...severe pain in the head and eyes, often with tenderness in the eyes and pain in moving them; pains in the ears; pains in the small of the back; pains in the limbs, for the most part in the fleshy portions, but also in the bones and joints, and even in the fingers and toes; and febrile temperature, which may in the early period rise to 104 or 105 degrees Fahrenheit.” Additional symptoms he observed were dryness and soreness of the throat, discharge from the nose, wheezing, cough, diarrhea, and a red spotty rash. He related that these symptoms could last three to four days, and under ordinary conditions, the patient usually recovered.¹⁰

The 1918 pandemic influenza produced all of the above symptoms and more. According to Dr. Waite, “Some of the more characteristic symptoms which are especially interesting are the sudden onset [there were reports from all over the world of people falling down ill as they walked down the street], the severe pain particularly in the loins, muscles, joints and the frontal portion of the head, frequent hemorrhages from the nose and other parts of the respiratory tract, the infrequency of a noticeable discharge from the nose... the distressing cough with little or no expectoration at first, insomnia, chilly sensations without a distinct chill, the high temperature, [and] the marked prostration.”¹¹

In August, the troops brought influenza back to the United States; it accompanied them like their duffel bags as they traveled home in ships. But the virus had changed, as flu is known to do. A peculiar characteristic appearing later in the 1918 pandemic was its hemorrhagic quality. Soldiers were reported arriving from Europe covered in blood, not from

¹⁰ H. H. Waite, “Influenza,” *The Nebraska State Medical Journal* 4, no. 3 (1918): 78.

¹¹ Waite, 79.

wounds suffered in war, but from extreme nose bleeds, coughing up blood and bleeding from the ears, as they traveled across the ocean back to the United States. Some also had a blue coloration to their skin, especially noticeable around the lips and on the fingertips. Most who had the blue coloration did not survive, and autopsies revealed their lungs were choked with blood. They had literally drowned in their own blood, from the inside out. This would later be attributed to an especially virulent bacterial pneumonia that was a secondary infection from the flu, but was often the culprit causing mortality.¹²

When the flu returned to the United States in late August of 1918, it arrived in Boston along with military troops.¹³ Influenza was reported as prevalent throughout the state of Nebraska by October 1st, but the first case in the state officially identified occurred in Omaha on October 3rd.¹⁴ Soon after, the flu arrived in Lincoln, the capital of Nebraska. Influenza was not made reportable by the state until October 7, 1918. The first week of state reporting showed an average of 145 cases appearing daily, with a daily average of two deaths. It was at this point that the Lancaster County board of health, acting on behalf of the state, declared all “schools, churches, places of entertainment or public congregation, pool halls and other places of amusement” closed until further notice.¹⁵ Ironically, the title of the article reporting this information was “Backbone Broken of Big Epidemic.” It would not be the last of the ironies in state and local newspaper headlines.

¹² Barry, 2.

¹³ Barry, 187.

¹⁴ Gernhart, 38; A.D. Dunn, “Observations on an epidemic of bronchopneumonia in Omaha,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 71, no. 26 (1918): 2128.

¹⁵ “Backbone broken of big epidemic,” *Evening State Journal*, October 14, 1918.

The toll on Omaha was great, and record keeping was not paramount to clinicians when hospitals and clinics were overflowing with patients needing care. Data from the Douglas County Health Department reflects numbers that are significantly lower than other sources of the same statistics.¹⁶ [Pandemicflu.gov](http://pandemicflu.gov) reports on October 7th, there were 2,500 cases of influenza in Omaha alone. On October 19th, 160 deaths were registered in the city. “These figures were probably inaccurate; during the pandemic, state officials were unable to track the disease effectively, with the result that many deaths and cases went unreported.”¹⁷

It is implied by the *Evening State Journal*, the state newspaper for Nebraska at the time, that even before influenza was considered a reportable disease, it had gained a firm foothold in the military installations in the state. One of those installations was on the campus of the University of Nebraska, the institution that would later become the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, or UNL. On October 18th, it was reported that the influenza epidemic had lessened considerably at the university, and it was assumed that the peak of the epidemic had passed.¹⁸ Here it is important to note that at the start of the school year, September 15th, the university had converted itself into a recruiting and training post for soldiers, as well as an academic institution, due to the war effort. Two weeks later, the epidemic began to rage on the campus, and classes were suspended. Not until after Thanksgiving of 1918 would the university attempt to resume normal operations.¹⁹

¹⁶ Gernhart, 74-78; H. Markel, H.B. Lipman, J.A. Navarro, A. Sloan, J.R. Michalsen, A.M. Stern, M.S. Cetron, “Nonpharmaceutical interventions implemented by US cities during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic,” *JAMA* 298, no. 6 (2007) 654.

¹⁷ The Great Pandemic the United States in 1918-1919 (Washington, D.C.: United States Dept of Health and Human Services) http://www.flu.gov/pandemic/history/1918/your_state/midwest/nebraska/index.html (accessed 8/26/2014).

¹⁸ “Epidemic under control,” *Evening State Journal*, Oct. 18, 1918.

¹⁹ “The senate to take action,” *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 27, 1918.

Four days later, on October 22nd, 100 new cases appeared in twenty-four hours at the State Farm cantonment, a military installation outside of Lincoln. This spike was attributed to 400 soldiers arriving from outside of Nebraska, presumably bringing the contagion with them. At that point Dr. Chauncey Chapman, superintendent of the city health department, announced that the mortality rate for the influenza in Lincoln was 2%, the same rate that would be the final mortality rate worldwide for the pandemic.²⁰ Additionally, the state board of health noted 5,110 new cases that weekend from across the state. They noted that this figure did not include Omaha, as its reporting was so incomplete.²¹

Later in the month of October, Dr. Chapman noticed something that others around the world were noticing: unlike seasonal influenza, the largest age demographic for illness was not the normal very young and very old; instead it seemed most virulent in people aged 20 – 40. This was quite alarming, as the hardest hit were the healthiest age group, the same group that suffered many casualties of war. In late October, Dr. Chapman recounted that three-fourths of the people that died from the influenza were in that age range.²²

By the end of October, Lincoln had reported more than 100 deaths. Headlines from the *Evening Journal Star* stating “Spanish Influenza has Lost its Grip” and “More Cases of Influenza” would appear within the same week. The health board even considered lifting the ban on public gatherings, but eventually decided that would be a poor choice.²³

²⁰ “Influenza mercury takes sudden rise,” *Evening State Journal*, Oct. 22, 1918.

²¹ “What is a public gathering,” *Evening State Journal*, Oct. 22, 1918.

²² “Influenza is decreasing,” *Evening State Journal*, Oct. 23, 1918.

²³ “Ban not lifted by the health board,” *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 1, 1918.

One of the hardest hit institutions in Nebraska was the State Penitentiary. Early in November, the *Evening State Journal* reported “another death at the state prison,” as well as ten new cases of influenza. During the height of the outbreak, 87 prisoners and staff members were ill at one time, 27% of the institutional population. The penitentiary had a total of 130 cases, with six deaths. Four of the deaths were prisoners; the other two were a guard and his wife. The institution housed a total population of 328 persons, with 298 being inmates.²⁴ Of interest is the twenty-fifth biennial report of the Warden of the State Penitentiary for the biennium ending November 30, 1918; this document noted only two deaths due to influenza and pneumonia for the institution.²⁵

The Nebraska Hospital for the Insane had more than 75 cases, with at least four deaths.²⁶ Like the state penitentiary, its biennial report also under-reported deaths from influenza, but only by one case. The deaths were attributed to patients, all of whom were in poor health. The report also noted that, “...conditions have been unusual and at times serious, owing to the depletion in the ranks of the nurses and attendants, caused by the demands of the war. Added to this, we have to cope with an epidemic of Spanish influenza, which was a problem during the past summer and fall, causing much sickness among the employees, and adding a greater burden to the hospital physicians’ duties.”²⁷

²⁴ “Another death at the state prison,” *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 9, 1918.

²⁵ State of Nebraska, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Warden of the State Penitentiary* (Lincoln, NE: Nov. 30, 1918).

²⁶ “Another death,” Nov. 9, 1918.

²⁷ State of Nebraska, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of the Nebraska Hospital for the Insane* (Lincoln, NE: Nov. 30, 1918).

During the early part of November, the need for physicians in certain areas of Nebraska became critical. At the request of the Nebraska State Board of Health, the Federal health department funded seventeen physicians to be deployed to the hardest hit areas of the state. Twelve physicians were brought in from Chicago, and five Nebraska doctors chose to go on the government payroll and leave their home towns to tend to influenza patients in other parts of the state. It was reported that these doctors were criticized at home, where it was felt that their services were also badly needed.²⁸

On November 16, 1918, the *Evening State Journal* reported that October had the heaviest death list for any one month in Lincoln's history. According to the *Journal*, "[a] noticeable feature in connection with the number of deaths in the city is that there were no colored persons among the victims and but few reported as having influenza." The 1910 census reports Nebraska having an average of 0.6% Negro population. "The percentage of negroes is 2.1 in the urban and 0.1 in the rural."²⁹ Superintendent Chapman noted that the disease was still poorly understood and there was great diversity in the opinions in regard to it. Nasal hemorrhages were quite common and some pathologists reported after performing autopsies that the lungs resembled findings in the bubonic pulmonary plague. Early reports that month stated that Lincoln experienced 142 total deaths; the normal monthly death toll for Lincoln at that time was ten per month.³⁰ The final count in Lincoln for October 1918 would be 410, the greatest monthly mortality in Lincoln's history to date. Many of the 410 people who died in October 1918 in Lincoln are buried at Wyuka Cemetery. Only numbers and

²⁸ "Government paying physicians," *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 9, 1918.

²⁹ *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3*. (1910). United States Federal Government, 43.

³⁰ "City death record made in October," *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 16, 1918.

small stones mark some of the graves, as gravestone makers could not create larger monuments quickly enough to keep up with the deaths. Some families could only afford one gravestone, even if multiple family members passed away. Clusters of family deaths from the 1918 pandemic are present in cemeteries large and small throughout the state.³¹

As November drew to a close, Nebraska saw a decrease and then another increase in cases reported. The upturn was not necessarily due to more actual cases, but more likely due to improved reporting of the disease. With the reduction in cases, physicians and nurses had time to report on the disease to authorities. Still in place, community mitigation strategies had some of the desired effect on the infection rate and mortality of the influenza. State officials stressed the importance of isolation and quarantine, noting improper isolation of patients as one cause for the upturn in cases, and urging attention to this measure to protect the community and citizens' own families.³²

Doctors across the state defended their insufficient reporting, especially from October, for a variety of reasons. The long days doctors had to work tending to patients left little time for reporting, they said. At times the best they could do was report a location where influenza had been found, the location sometimes representing multiple cases.³³

The latter part of November marked the end of the rise in influenza cases. The peak of the flu had passed, though it lingered in Nebraska throughout the winter months and into the spring. On December 17th, physicians from throughout the state met to discuss the epidemic and the disease and mortality reporting. Final state death reporting varied from

³¹ Mark Andersen, "Flu history: Spanish flu claimed record lives," *Lincoln Journal Star*, May 2, 2009.

³² "Epidemic still declining," *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 19, 1918.

³³ "Strict quarantine may be necessary," *Evening State Journal*, Nov. 25, 1918.

2,800 – 7,500 persons.³⁴ Nebraska’s disease reporting was considered so inaccurate by Federal officials that the numbers would not be included in the total infection rate and mortality reported for the United States.³⁵

In examining Nebraska during the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic, the state appears to have followed a similar spike and downswing as did the rest of the United States, with the peak late in the month of October. About one-fourth of the population contracted the disease and the state had a 2% mortality rate, much like the rate reported throughout the world. Symptoms were similar to that of seasonal influenza but included a hemorrhagic component that was the hallmark of a deadly secondary pneumonia. Up to and perhaps more than 7,500 deaths occurred in Nebraska during the months of October – December statewide. Often several people in the same family died, as evidenced in cemeteries throughout the state. According to the 1910 census, 73.9% of Nebraskans lived in rural areas.³⁶ The remote nature of their homes did not stop the deadly grip of the influenza epidemic.

It is clear that the cities of Omaha and Lincoln had typical morbidity and mortality for urban communities that adhered to some forms of layered, nonpharmaceutical public health interventions, such as the ban on public gatherings during the 1918 pandemic. But what of the rural areas? Their story is absent from the state newspaper (*The Evening State Journal*), or any papers in Lincoln and Omaha. The following chapters examine the rural experience: communities of 2,500 people or fewer, and their lived experience.

³⁴ Jim McKee, “Spanish influenza epidemic hits state,” *Lincoln Journal Star*, Dec. 17, 2007; The Great Pandemic the United States...

³⁵ “Weekly Reports for January 17, 1919,” *Public Health Reports* 34, no. 3 (1919): 90.

³⁶ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 20.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- July 1914: World War I begins
- April 1917:
 - United States joins World War I
 - Committee on Public Information created by President Wilson
- February 1918: First wave of influenza pandemic begins
- March 1918: Manure dust storm at Camp Funston; troops begin to get sick
- May 1918: Troops land at Brest, France with the flu
- July 1918: Influenza has reached the entire world, even as far as Iceland
- August 1918: Second wave of pandemic begins as at the end of the month troops arrive in Boston from the European battlefield; many are ill with flu
- October 1918:
 - October 2: Two flu deaths reported in Red Cloud; Willa Cather's book *My Antonia* is advertised in Red Cloud; Cather is reported being seen in town
 - October 3: First case of flu reported in Omaha
 - October 7: Influenza becomes a reportable disease as declared by the Nebraska State Health Department
 - October 10: First cases of flu reported in Wayne
 - October 11: First cases of flu reported in Valentine
 - October 15: First cases of flu reported in Scottsbluff
 - October 18: First cases of flu reported in Gering
 - October 25: Scottsbluff businesses lobby to repeal ban on public gatherings as it is destroying the local economy; they win and the ban is lifted
 - Omaha and Lincoln are inundated by the flu; Lincoln makes the monthly death record of 410, never matched to this day
- November 1918
 - November 1: Statewide ban on public gatherings is lifted, likely to allow campaigning and elections the following week; Wayne, Red Cloud, follow suit
 - November 5: Election held, incumbent Senator Norris retains seat defeating Governor John H. Morehead; Wayne, Red Cloud hold elections, no record of elections could be found for the other towns in study
 - November 8: First cases of flu reported in Anselmo
 - November 11: WWI ends and armistice is declared; Wayne celebrates by terrorizing German Pastors; Valentine tries to celebrate but more flu deaths occur that day so they give up;
 - November 29: Valentine lifts ban on public gatherings
- December 1918
 - December 10: Scottsbluff asks State's permission to lift ban; only waits two days and lifts ban before getting a response
 - December 17: State Health Department holds state-wide meeting of medical men regarding the flu in Lincoln; the ban on public gatherings is reinstated and a fine structure is laid out for health violations;
- January 1919: The third wave of the pandemic begins

Figure 5: Timeline of events

CHAPTER THREE: WAYNE

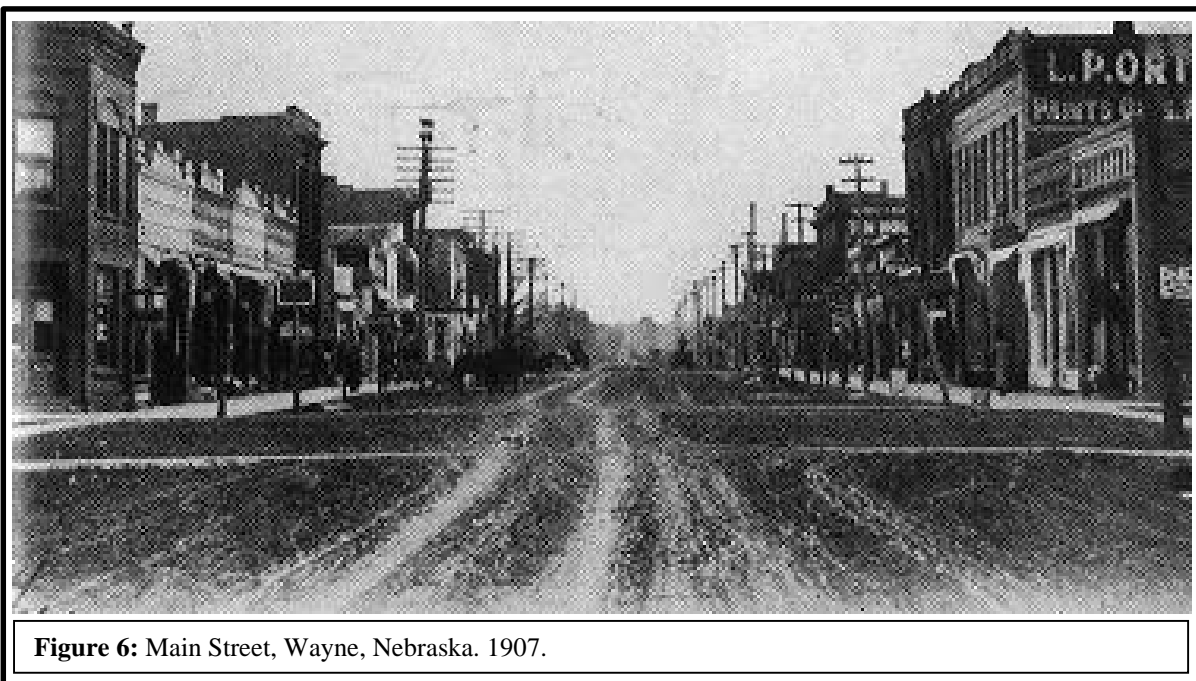


Figure 6: Main Street, Wayne, Nebraska. 1907.

Wayne is located in the northeastern portion of the state, founded in 1881 when the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railroads extended their tracks, connecting the town of Norfolk, Nebraska, to Sioux City, Iowa. After the railroad bypassed the original Wayne County seat, settlers petitioned local government to have the seat moved to Wayne. An election ensued and in 1882 Wayne was named the official seat of Wayne County by a wide margin.¹

Wayne County covers approximately 450 square miles of land, originally divided into 14 districts. Due to ice-age glaciation, the county has dark fertile soils, ideal for agriculture and raising all types of grazing animals. Early immigrant settlers in the late 1800s were primarily European populations, in particular those of German heritage. Germans settled heavily in the northeastern portion of Nebraska.²

¹ Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Wayne: Wayne County (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska at Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/wayne/wayne/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

² Christina Slattery, Chad Moffett, *Wayne county Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey* (Madison, WI: Mead & Hunt, 2000), 2-1.

In 1910, the population of the town of Wayne was 2,140. The population of the county was 10,397, 25.6% of direct German descent.³ The center of social life, the Opera House, built in 1890, brought a variety of cultural attractions to the area. In 1891, Professor J.M. Pile opened the Nebraska Normal College, a teachers college. Over the years it evolved into what is now Wayne State College. Wayne established telephone service in 1897, and a power plant was built in 1898, at first providing service only in the evenings. Its diversity of industry, agriculture, and education, provided the town of Wayne a solid and sustaining economic base.⁴

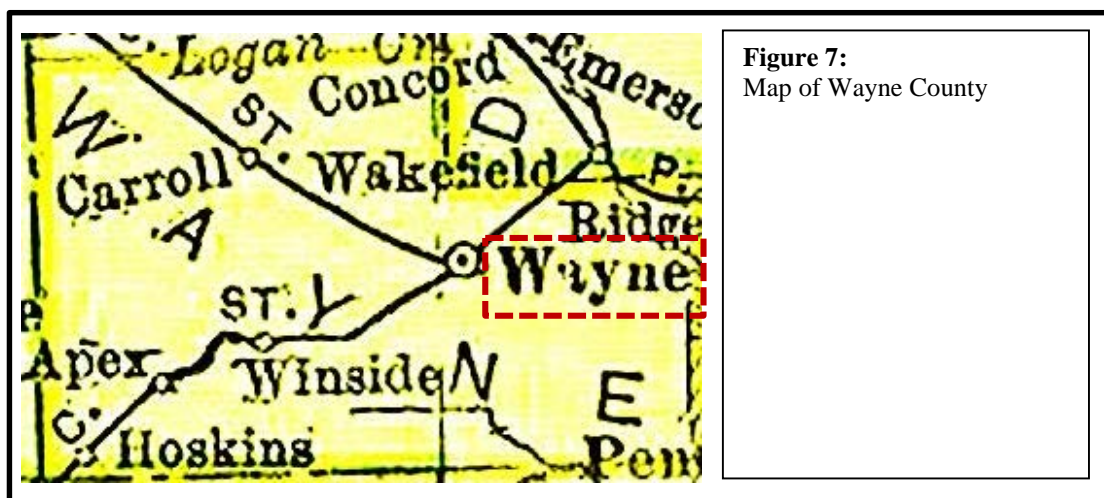


Figure 7:
Map of Wayne County

In 1918, Wayne had three newspapers, the *Nebraska Democrat* (*Democrat*), the *Wayne Herald* (*Herald*), and a paper from the Normal College, the *Goldenrod*. The *Herald* described itself as “the oldest established newspaper in Wayne County,”⁵ and both the *Democrat* and *Herald* were published weekly on Thursdays. The *Goldenrod* was also published weekly, though it missed two issues during the fall of 1918, due to the epidemic.

Throughout the study period of October 1 – December 31, 1918, the *Goldenrod* published little news of the flu. Though other papers documented extensive cases of flu and multiple obituaries,

³ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 66.

⁴ Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Wayne: Wayne County (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska at Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/wayne/wayne/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

⁵ *Wayne Herald*, October 3, 1918.

the Normal School appears as if only moderately affected, according to the *Goldenrod*. On October 14, there is some joking about the flu, with students commenting that they would rather have the flu than the curative that was being handed out, and that no one could figure out how anything (even the flu) could survive in the boys' dorms.⁶ The paper of the Normal School did dedicate a significant column on the front page of the November 4 issue to the teamwork in fighting the epidemic. The 63 cases of influenza to date at the school caused a significant burden for the institution. The kitchen staff coordinated with domestic sciences, creating a sick ward. Students assisted in caring for and entertaining the ill. "As a protection, attendants wore bandages over their nose and mouth and twitted themselves on their 'gasmasks.'" ⁷ Even the president and his wife opened their home to three of the sick boys. They were extremely proud of their teamwork, saying "no hospital could have provided better care, diet or nursing than that displayed on the Hill."⁸

A break in *Goldenrod* distribution occurred in the middle of November, and the November 11 issue mentions three weeks of students unsuccessfully "swatting the flu," but now they are ready to forget the pest.⁹ True to their word, there are only occasional mentions of an ailing student in all remaining issues of the *Goldenrod* for the year 1918. Though Wayne and the surrounding communities were deeply affected, the Normal College did not suffer one death.

The *Herald* and the *Democrat* were examined closely to see if they reported the same stories or different ones. The history of each is important – the *Democrat* was published from 1884 – 1934. In 1918, it was a more serious paper than the *Herald*, with no fiction or frivolous news beyond the comings and goings of the community members and church notices. It contained many advertisements for farm commodities such as cattle and hogs, sales notices, and multiple pages for

⁶ *The Goldenrod*, October 14, 1918.

⁷ "Team Work," *The Goldenrod*, November 4, 1918.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *The Goldenrod*, November 11, 1918.

business and farming matters, as well as strong articles from local churches urging all to go to church.¹⁰

The *Herald* began in 1888 and is still operating in 2015 as the *Wayne Herald/Morning Shopper*.¹¹ In 1918, at the start of October, it was full of fiction articles, “Uncle Walt the Poet Philosopher,” domestic concerns, and news articles written in a more colorful style than those in other publications of the period examined for this study. As the flu progressed and the war neared its end, the *Herald* took a more serious tone, but by November 28, 1918, the fiction sections appeared again.¹²

The *Herald's* flair for the dramatic was showcased by two article titles on October 3, 1918: “Influenza epidemic delays troop movements: boys couldn’t leave on account of disease in army camps,” and “SPANISH INFLUENZA.”¹³ The article on the troops was an update that 74 boys from Wayne County would not be deployed on account of 14,000 cases of influenza reported in army camps within 24 hours. A lengthy piece on the Spanish Influenza quoted the health officer of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and contained information on the symptoms of the flu and how the disease was spread. The *Democrat* had a small article towards the back about two people ill, but the health warning would wait an entire week for their readers.¹⁴

On Thursday, October 10, 1918, readers of the *Democrat* finally got their health warning in the form of a short, but centrally placed front page article announcing that Mayor Lamberson had received word from the State health department. The flu was now a reportable disease and, “proper

¹⁰ Nebraska State Historical Society: “Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm: Wabash to Wyoming,” (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2011), http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/W-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed September 28, 2015).

¹¹ MyWayneNews, “About the Wayne Herald/Morning Shopper,” (Wayne, Nebraska: Wayne Herald, 2015), http://www.mywaynenews.com/our_newspaper/about_us/ (accessed September 28, 2015); Nebraska State Historical Society: “Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm: Wabash to Wyoming,” (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2011), http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/W-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed September 28, 2015).

¹² *Wayne Herald*, November 28, 1918.

¹³ *Wayne Herald*, October 3, 1918.

¹⁴ *Nebraska Democrat*, October 3, 1918.

restrictions may be used to prevent its spread. All are expected to comply with this rule or suffer the penalties. It is a war measure.”¹⁵

The newspaper reported that Wayne itself so far had encountered very few cases of the flu, with no fatalities, and it was hoped the epidemic was over. The article shows the powerlessness of the people to combat the flu except in a traditional way: the open air treatment of flu and tuberculosis was by far the most popular treatment for respiratory ailments of the era. To this day, one can see houses from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that have three-season porches, added for both beauty and health.

Of greatest interest is a clear statement on how to ward off pneumonia occurring after the flu – deep breathing, however the technique and length of breaths to take was not discussed. Community members knew pneumonia often followed the flu, and it was the disease that was more apt to kill. The advice was to continue deep breathing, for weeks if necessary, until all signs of pneumonia had passed. The last line apologized to local doctors for taking work from them, but this advice should help the “over-worked and worried physician.”¹⁶

Documented later in the edition, flu cases were growing, not shrinking, as reported on the front page. The social news contained multiple snippets about new cases of influenza, schools being closed due to the disease, and teachers returning to their homes for what would be dubbed flu vacation. Even the women’s Bible study news focused on the reading of a letter from the corresponding military secretary based at Fort Riley, Kansas, who stated that, “[f]rom his hospital five or six fine boys carried out daily having died from the dreadful disease.”¹⁷

As the weeks progressed into October, the deaths mounted. As the county seat, Wayne was interconnected with all the communities in the county, as well as those between Sioux City, Iowa, in

¹⁵ “Health notice regarding the influenza,” *Nebraska Democrat*, October 10, 1918.

¹⁶ “The Spanish influenza,” *Nebraska Democrat*, October 10, 1918.

¹⁷ “Social notes,” *Nebraska Democrat*, October 10, 1918.

the east and Norfolk, Nebraska, in the west. The newspapers illustrated this clearly, with most small communities having a strong presence in both local papers. It is also possible to see the importance of the interconnectedness of these communities. Livestock, grain, industrial items, all circulated throughout the region, not just the town. Wayne's vibrant nature was due in part to these small hamlets, as it appeared that the community operated as a region, not as a single town. Also, unlike the cities, there was an extreme sense of personal responsibility expressed quite vocally in the news: obey the health officials and stay home. The Wayne papers documented the compliance of their citizens, who appeared to observe and advocate for quarantine regulations. The Normal College became a good case study in this, as their isolation and supportive care measures saved the lives of the students.¹⁸

The October 24, 1918 editions of the *Herald* and the *Democrat* would be the bleakest to date. The movie house had closed its doors for the time being, funerals were being held outdoors, and even then people were not attending them in fear of contracting the flu. Both papers had front page articles on the double funeral of a 24 year old man and his 19 year old female cousin from the Carroll family, both died from influenza/pneumonia within one week. The young man left behind a wife and infant son, and both had extended family that were mentioned in the article. This was the first notice in Wayne of multiple person funerals, others followed in the paper immediately after the Carroll family notice.¹⁹

The same edition reported that Bloomfield, a nearby community, had suffered between 30 – 40 deaths, 3% of their population of 1,264, with many still ill.²⁰ For most regions, 2 – 3% mortality was the final toll, but as this study shows, certain areas, even with isolation and quarantine precautions, did not fare as well. To date, there is no single explanation.

¹⁸ "At the college," *Nebraska Democrat*, October 17, 1918.

¹⁹ "Two die in one Randolph home Monday" *Nebraska Democrat*, October 24, 1918.

²⁰ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 32; *Nebraska Democrat*, October 24, 1918.

1918 was an election year for Nebraska, in particular for the important role of United States Senator. This had a distinctive social impact for citizens of the state in light of the influenza epidemic. The State had announced a ban on all public gatherings earlier in October. Because of this, political tours were significantly affected, as public gatherings were not allowed, putting an abrupt halt to campaigning in some areas. Despite such restraint, Wayne provided the first evidence that politicians would prevail, as the October 31, 1918 editions of the *Herald* and the *Democrat* noted that the quarantine ban was to be lifted tomorrow, just in time to give candidates five days to campaign prior to the election on the following Tuesday, November 5. The polls opened statewide, and it was a close race, with incumbent Republican Senator George W. Norris defeating Democratic Governor John H. Morehead for the seat, 54.5% to 45.5%.²¹

The same Wayne papers noting the lifting of the quarantine also had the greatest number of obituaries and notices of illness of influenza or pneumonia to date. The disease appeared to be reaching a significant amount of the population, greater than ever before; and the timing coincides with the lifting of the quarantine. This is an interesting look at how the political machine disregarded the health and safety of its citizens to the advantage of the government. It is a theme that continues to prevail in disease response to date.

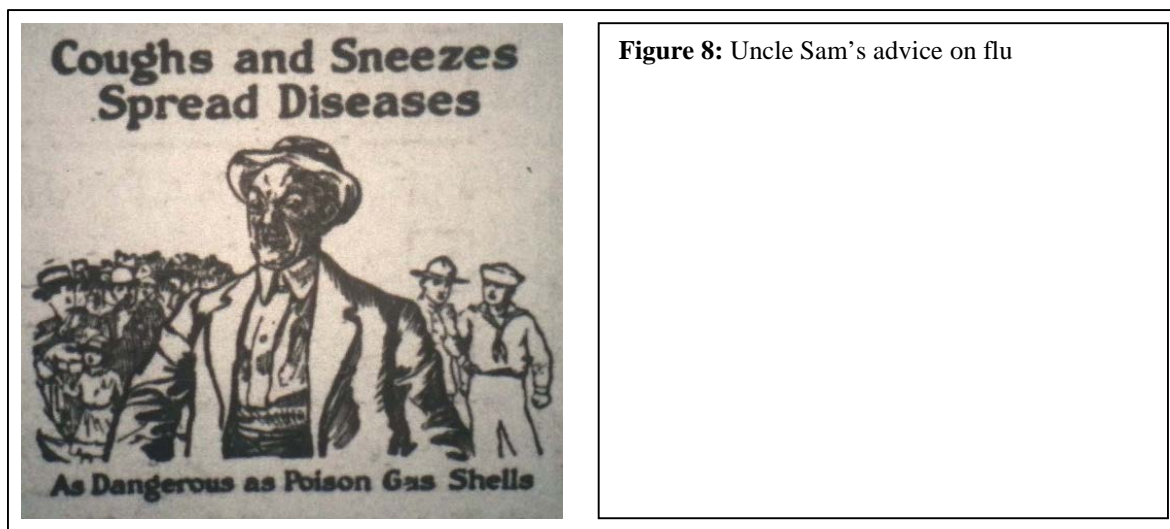


Figure 8: Uncle Sam's advice on flu

²¹ Nebraska US Senate, <http://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=267939> (accessed September 30, 2015); *Nebraska Democrat*, October 31, 1918; *Wayne Herald*, October 31, 1918.

For the first time, in the *Democrat*, the article “Uncle Sam’s advice on flu” appears. This was one of the most widely published articles in the newspapers examined for this study. It is an official bulletin from the United States Public Health Service; true to World War I propaganda, it uses a slogan to inspire people to remember what causes the disease, “coughs and sneezes spread diseases.” Interestingly for such a virulent virus, the article calls it “a very contagious kind of ‘cold,’ accompanied by fever...”²²

As the weeks wore on, the *Herald* appeared to tire of flu coverage, and had few reports of sickness. It did note other social occurrences, in part due to the ending of World War I on November 11, 1918, when armistice was declared.²³ Local newspapers reported there was no celebration on the battlefield. In Wayne, citizens celebrated armistice by terrorizing German Pastors. The large group of men and boys started out to simply ring church bells, but due to misunderstandings, ended up burning song and text books and humiliating church pastors. In one instance, 14 automobile loads of protestors drove to a pastor’s home, claiming him disloyal due to his German heritage, even though his son was currently overseas fighting for the United States in the war. The paper noted they were unsure what was done to him. The article by-line clearly tried to absolve most of the community of guilt when it stated “conduct of offending group does not reflect dominant sentiment in Wayne.”²⁴

Though many deaths and multiple illnesses continued to be reported in November, the State of Nebraska decided to lift its ban on public gatherings on November 18, 1918.²⁵ It is hard to say why the state selected this option, perhaps health directors felt the quarantine

²² “Uncle Sam’s advice on flu,” *Nebraska Democrat*, October 31, 1918.

²³ Armistice - The End of World War I, 1918, <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/armistice.htm> (accessed September 30, 2015).

²⁴ “Humiliation of Church pastors,” *Wayne Herald*, November 14, 1918.

²⁵ “No state wide ban,” *Wayne Herald*, November 21, 1918.

wasn't working, or enforcement was impossible. Numbers through the months indicated that lifting the ban lead to an increase in cases across the state. Statements from physicians in Omaha may have swayed some officials. Dr. Manning, at a regular meeting of the Omaha Douglas County Medical Society said, "[i]t is the carriers who spread it in most cases – the ambulatory cases that keep it going. We cannot quarantine against carriers...I think quarantine is a farce."²⁶

The flu raged on as Wayne saw prominent businessmen fall victim, multiple deaths in single families, teachers, and farmers all dying in the prime of their lives, from pneumonia and influenza.²⁷ The newspapers would announce the re-instatement of the state wide ban on public gatherings on December 19. After an emergency state meeting in Lincoln Tuesday, December 17th, Dr. Manning had to change his statements and instead of dismissing quarantine, he instead offered a stiff penalty to physicians, "Any physician failing to report [the disease] within 12 hours is to be instantly prosecuted, and upon conviction fined from \$15 to \$100."²⁸

The flu had died down in Wayne County by the final newspaper editions of 1918, though it continued to infect hundreds in the cities of Nebraska.²⁹ The cities of Omaha and Lincoln swelled again with fear and disease, while Wayne and the surrounding area were glad to put widespread flu behind them.

²⁶ WH Wherry, "Regular meeting Omaha-Douglas County Medical Society," *The Nebraska State Medical Journal* IV, no. 2 (1919): 47-48.

²⁷ "Wakefield citizen dies," *Wayne Herald*, November 28, 1918; "Death of Carl Sweigart," *Wayne Herald*, December 19, 1918.

²⁸ "State health board for rigid quarantine," *Wayne Herald*, December 19, 1918.

²⁹ "Quarantine for influenza cases," *Wayne Herald*, December 26, 1918; "State Department of Health," *Nebraska Democrat*, December 26, 1918.

CHAPTER FOUR: RED CLOUD



Figure 9: Main intersection, Red Cloud, Nebraska, 1909.

Red Cloud is located in the south central portion of Nebraska in the Republican River valley. Named for the Nebraska Indian chief who fought the U.S. government for land in the 1870s, the town was the childhood home of one of the most famous American authors of the 20th century, Willa Cather. Red Cloud was founded in 1871, just three years after Nebraska became a state. The advent of railroads in 1881 solidified Red Cloud's status as a community in progress, connecting the town directly to Kansas City and Denver. This created a different kind of cosmopolitan hub not seen anywhere else in Nebraska at the time, especially not in rural areas. Initial review of newspapers and articles about Red Cloud revealed its more worldly nature because of the comings and goings of residents. And the fame of author Willa Cather, just releasing her fourth novel, *My Antonia*, was advertised in all the local papers in October of 1918, as was a "Cather sighting," just prior to her return to the East Coast in October of 1918, where she would spend the remainder of the influenza pandemic.¹ Significantly, one of Cather's next books would be about World War I and the struggle of

¹ "Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Red Cloud: Webster County" (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska at Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/webster/redcloud/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

a German American soldier from Nebraska, his perspective, and the ironic tragedy of both war and life. This work, *One of Ours*, included a graphic chapter on the ravages of the flu from a physician's perspective, based on journals Cather borrowed from a physician. This was the East Coast doctor that treated her for influenza during the flu season of the fall of 1919. The physician had served on a World War I troop ship returning to the U.S. from the western front and had watched hundreds of soldiers die of influenza and pneumonia, unable to do much but provide comfort and attend to them as they passed. This poignant account was part of a rich story resulting in Cather's being awarded the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1923 for *One of Ours*.²

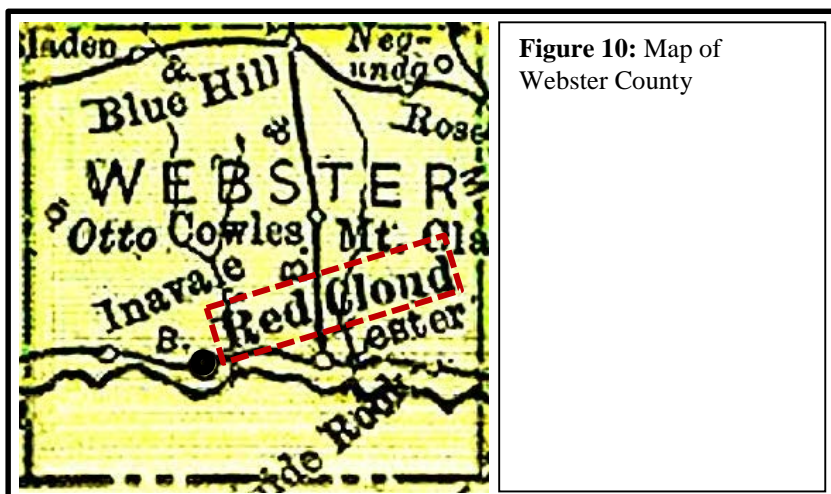


Figure 10: Map of Webster County

Webster County covers 576 square miles of land, and Red Cloud serves as the county seat. The primary industry is agriculture.³ In 1910, the population of the town of Red Cloud was 1,686, and the population of Webster County was 12,008, 12% of direct German descent.⁴ This is considerably fewer than Wayne's 26% of the county being of German descent, and yet it is the nationality Cather

² Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (New York: Alfred A Knopf), 292-302; Steven Trout, "Willa Cather's One of Ours and the Iconography of Remembrance," *Cather Studies* 4 (1999): 187-204; Timeline (Red Cloud, Nebraska: The Willa Cather Foundation) <https://www.willacather.org/about/willa-cather/timeline> (accessed October 6, 2015); Joyce McDonald, "Willa Cather north by northwest," (Lincoln, Nebraska: Cather Project) <http://cather.unl.edu/community.tours.jaffrey.html> (accessed February 15, 2015).

³ "County History," (Red Cloud, Nebraska: Webster County) <http://www.co.webster.ne.us/webpages/about/history.html> (accessed October 8, 2015).

⁴ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 66.

selects for her main character in *One of Ours*. In examining the 1910 census, those of German heritage, as in Wayne, represent the largest single ethnic group in Red Cloud at that time.⁵ As Red Cloud is a community in a sense defined by Willa Cather, it is fascinating to discover she is not of German descent, nor was she born in Nebraska. She did not arrive in the state until she was nine years old and fled the state as soon as she finished college at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. In fact, unlike many Nebraskans who were direct or first generation immigrants, her family had been in America more than four generations, with her Irish and Welsh ancestors settling first in Virginia in the 1700s. Damp climate, tuberculosis in the family, and stories from Willa's grandfather and uncle about the bounty of homesteading brought the Cathers from Virginia to Nebraska in 1883. Willa's first playmate in Red Cloud was German, and it is likely her family's journey across country inspired the story of orphaned 10 year old Jim Burden as he traveled across country from Virginia to Nebraska in *My Antonia*.⁶ Cather's love for European ideas, music, and culture, especially those of France and Germany, is well documented. She often referenced famous German opera composer Richard Wagner in her novels, and one biographer described her as living by many of the philosophies of Goethe.⁷ Regardless of how she was inspired, the German influence and cultural presence in Red Cloud had a significant impact on this great author and how the culture of Nebraska would be taught to the world through her works.

In 1918, Red Cloud had three newspapers: the *Webster County Argus (Argus)*, the *Commercial Advertiser (Advertiser)* and the *Red Cloud Chief (Chief)*. The most significant and longest running of the papers was the *Chief*. Established in 1873, just two years after the founding of Red Cloud, it is in operation today. One hundred and forty-two years later, subscriptions are less than

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Mildred Bennett, *The World of Willa Cather* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 1-3.

⁷ Peter Sullivan, "Willa Cather's German Connections," *Cather Studies* 4 (1999).

one dollar per week.⁸ Publication of the *Argus* occurred 1878 – 1930,⁹ and the *Advertiser* ran 1908 through 1967.¹⁰ The *Chief* and *Argus* ran weekly editions, while the *Advertiser* could be purchased weekly, semi-weekly, and tri-weekly.¹¹

In contrast to Wayne, and correlating with newspapers from Omaha and Lincoln, Red Cloud papers announced local deaths from the flu on October 2, 1918, prior to the State making it a reportable disease later that month. Headlines like, “Grim Reaper still on the job,”¹² indicate that flu deaths were likely reported prior to the beginning of October. The same issue of the *Advertiser* contained a one sentence advertisement, “‘My Antonio,’ the new book by Willa Sibert Cather, is now on sale at Cotting’s.”¹³ The *Argus* would run the same ad, but with the correct book title, “My Antonia.”¹⁴

The *Advertiser* reported only one known case of influenza in Red Cloud on October 9, 1918. For the first weeks of October, all three papers reported the flu in Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska; Kansas City, Missouri; Camp Dodge, Iowa, and multiple army camps. As in Wayne, the 34 boys preparing to depart for Camp Funston, Kansas were told to stay home. “The epidemic of Influenza is believed to be responsible for the cancellation of the call.”¹⁵

⁸ Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Ragan to Ruskin (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2009), http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/R-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed October 8, 2015); Subscribe to the Red Cloud Chief (Red Cloud, Nebraska: Main Street Media, 2015), <http://www.iclassifiedsnetwork.com/43334/1689/subscribe-to-red-cloud-chief> (accessed October 8, 2015).

⁹ About Webster County Argus (Red Cloud, Nebraska: A.J. Kenney), <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95061674/> (accessed October 8, 2015).

¹⁰ Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Ragan to Ruskin (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2009), http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/R-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed October 8, 2015).

¹¹ *Commercial Advertiser*, October 2, 1918.

¹² “The Grim Reaper still on the job,” *Commercial Advertiser*, October 2, 1918.

¹³ *Commercial Advertiser*, October 2, 1918.

¹⁴ *Webster County Argus*, October 3, 1918.

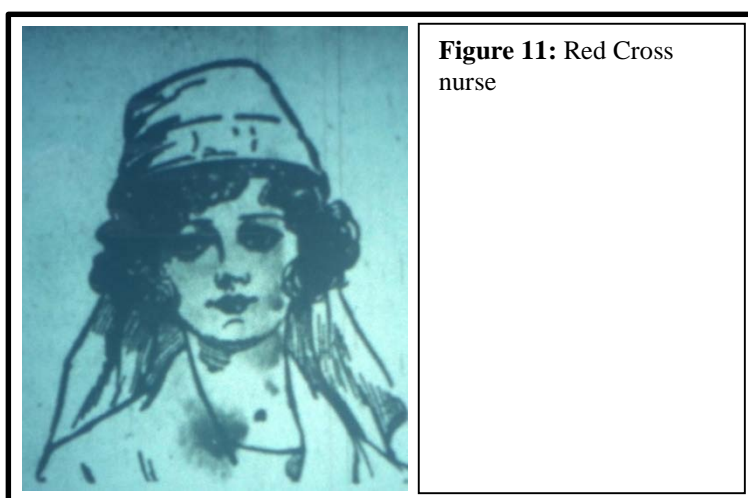
¹⁵ *Ibid*; *Commercial Advertiser*, October 2, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, October 4, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, October 9, 1918.

On October 10, 1918, the influenza crisis reached a fever pitch in Omaha, culminating in the postponement of the Nebraska Baptist Convention. Health officials urged the entire state to enact a ban on public gatherings to protect them from the fate Omaha suffered. The Fort Omaha military Balloon School had a particularly bad outbreak, leading to the quarantine of the entire camp. It was at this time the City Board of Health for Red Cloud published new rules and regulations. The *Chief* and the *Argus* published the exact same article, likely a press release directly from the board of health. New rules were for all contagious diseases considered reportable. Diseases that had to be reported in person, to the board of health, by the head of household or a physician, included: chicken pox, small pox, diphtheria, septic sore throat, scarlet fever, cerebrospinal meningitis, Spanish influenza, typhoid fever, pulmonary tuberculosis, and polio melitis [sic]. Rubella, measles, mumps, and whooping cough could be reported by telephone. The notice also called for the closing of all churches, picture shows, pool halls, and other places of public gatherings. The board required all milk to be pasteurized, that people adhere to the principles of hygiene, avoid using common towels, and not share eating or drinking utensils. No public funerals were allowed, and anyone dying of any of the aforementioned diseases had to be put in a hermetically sealed coffin where the cover was glued and then screwed down, to ensure no one could touch the body. A glass cover was allowed, with the proper sealing, so the body could be viewed by loved ones. The terms of violation were made clear at the beginning of the article. The first line read, “any one violating the rules shall upon conviction be fined for each and every offense \$15 the least and not more than \$100.”¹⁶ In 2015 dollars that equates to a fine between \$236 - \$1,500.¹⁷ Red Cloud followed the State’s recommendations; there is no mention of fines being levied for any aforementioned violation.

¹⁶ “New rules and regulations,” *Webster County Argus*, October 10, 1918; “New rules and regulations,” *Red Cloud Chief*, October 10, 1918.

¹⁷ US Inflation Calculator (San Antonio, Texas: Coin News Media Group, 2015), <http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/> (accessed October 8, 2015).

By October 17, all three newspapers exploded with reports of the flu. Cases in Red Cloud were still less than ten, but reports that nearby communities like Guide Rock were suffering deaths put citizens of Red Cloud on high alert; they were determined not to suffer the fate of nearby communities. A local physician published a plea in the *Argus* to honor the public gathering ban, “in order to prevent conditions becoming as they are ‘in other places...’”¹⁸ Nearby communities of Bostwick and Guide Rock had few families that had escaped the malady, and death reports from these towns appeared in all the papers. As to be expected, the ubiquitous “Uncle Sam’s Advice on Flu,” was published in the October 17 edition of the *Argus*, and citizens were reminded “coughs and sneezes spread diseases.”¹⁹ It was also noted that Lincoln, Nebraska, had a shortage of telephone operators, as their chief operator and two other ladies were suffering from the prevailing malady.²⁰



The *Advertiser* would be the single publication to note one of the greatest articles on local pride: the first Webster County girl was selected to be a Red Cross nurse. She was from Blue Hill, in the northwestern corner of the county, and had quit her job as a teacher to become a nurse.²¹ This is

¹⁸ “Local physician urges closing public meetings,” *Webster County Argus*, October 17, 1918.

¹⁹ *Webster County Argus*, October 17, 1918.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “First county girl called as a nurse.” *Commercial Advertiser*, October 18, 1918.

the single instance in the rural papers examined for this study where a woman is commended for her dedication to the war and health effort as a professional. There are many, albeit pandering, articles about how wonderful it was that women were volunteering, raising money for Liberty Loans, making surgical dressings and gathering supplies for the Red Cross, and making sure the family didn't consume too much sugar, meat or coffee – save it for our boys on the battlefield! Beyond domestic prowess there were discussions of mothers agonizing over the death of their children or dying giving birth to them, and the discussion of female teachers getting flu vacations, as if this were somehow something pleasant, as many of them lost wages for their time off. It is fitting that this article on professional female excellence appeared in Willa Cather's community, as she was a woman known for breaking stereotypes and being a consummate professional.

Though the town of Red Cloud upheld the ban on public gatherings, the rail, motor car, and horse and wagon continued to transport citizens of Webster County all about the country. Papers reported cases from Milwaukee to Denver, all somehow related to Red Cloud or Webster County.²² This was the cosmopolitan nature of Red Cloud alluded to earlier. Travelers from Omaha may have had access to other states and cities, but no other rural community examined for this study had direct access to both Kansas City and Denver, two of the greatest Midwestern cities. Interlaced with obituaries and reports of illness, detailed down to the family member, were reports of travel to cities, towns, and places far across the country, even a note that, "Mr. Floyd McCall and Mr. Ed Hersh have done some good road work this week."²³ This highlights the importance of smooth travel, even in the time of a ban on public gatherings.

As in Wayne, the final newspapers of October announced the rescinding of the ban on public gatherings on Friday morning, November 1, 1918. These editions contained sample ballots for the following Tuesday's election, and multiple endorsements and editorials for candidates. Again the ban

²² *Webster County Argus*, October 24, 1918.

²³ *Commercial Advertiser*, October 23, 1918.

was lifted just in time for the elections to occur.²⁴ The *Advertiser* posted election results first, showing Senator Norris, liberal Republican, as retaining his senate seat.²⁵

As November continued, the newspapers reported cases of flu and obituaries in the social sections, along with births and weddings, almost as if influenza had integrated itself as a normal part of life. Official reports sometimes merited their own paragraph, like one from the Board of Controls. They reported the Beatrice Institute for the Feeble Minded had 137 of 500 inmates ill with influenza, more than 27% of the institution's population. An unknown number of staff and assistants were also listed as ill, leaving few to care for the sick.²⁶ Though Norfolk was very close to Wayne, it was a Red Cloud paper that reported the epidemic had broken out at the State Hospital for the Insane in Norfolk. More than 40 patients were isolated and the hospital suffered several deaths from the flu. The same report indicated that Norfolk was suffering as cities all across the United States, with three deaths per day occurring over the first week of November.²⁷

In keeping with their cosmopolitan nature, Red Cloud was pleased to celebrate the end of World War I, and report on all the happenings across the state, especially Omaha, to Washington, D.C., to Versailles, France. It was the only community in this study, and the *Chief* the only source, to note 15 physicians had been stationed in Nebraska by the Federal government to combat the flu. These were the same physicians, some Nebraskan but most from out-of-state, that the Lincoln papers discussed. They were station by the United States health department and compensated by the Federal government. Aside from articles scolding local physicians for abandoning their communities for Federal government pay, this is the only example found for this study praising physicians for

²⁴ *Webster County Argus*, October 31, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, October 30, 1918; *Red Cloud Chief*, October 31, 1918.

²⁵ Biographical directory of the United States Congress: NORRIS, George William, (1861 - 1944) (Washington, DC), <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=N000139> (accessed October 10, 2015); *Commercial Advertiser*, November 6, 1918.

²⁶ *Webster County Argus*, November 7, 1918; *Red Cloud Chief*, November 14, 1918.

²⁷ *Webster County Argus*, November 14, 1918.

government work.²⁸ Most praise was reserved for local physicians who endured the hardship of being the single doctor for hundreds of miles. Even with the initial ban on public gatherings, and Red Cloud citizens complying with vigor, the flu returned by the end of November, only needing a short time after elections to gain a foothold again. Red Cloud mirrored Wayne and other rural communities, reinstating the ban on public gatherings, knowing that it may have already been too late to make a difference. Finally, the *Argus* confessed that Red Cloud now suffered from considerable sickness, unable to keep the epidemic under control, as it had during October.²⁹

Praises for a local physician came early in December when Dr. J.W. Stockman returned from his service in the Great War at Fort Riley, Kansas, caring for influenza patients. It seems he was mistakenly discharged, as the perception was that fewer physicians were now needed. This mistake forced local physician Dr. Mitchell to be recalled to Fort Riley before making it back to Red Cloud. Escaping influenza was not an option for Dr. Stockman, as upon return to Red Cloud he was, “busier than a cranberry merchant taking care of flu cases.”³⁰ The *Chief* would comment, “with a large percentage of doctors absent on military service the prevailing epidemic keeps the remainder as busy as a dog with two sets of fleas.”³¹

As December wound to a close, reports of flu continued from other parts of the state. Omaha reported 32 deaths in one day and cases still rapidly rising; and a report from Lincoln listed 207 deaths during October of 1918, the highest death toll on record for Lincoln in one month.³² Amidst a flurry of flu illness and death notices, one short sentence summed up what Red Cloud and Webster County were experiencing: “the flu isn’t much better this week.”³³ All of Webster County reported

²⁸ *Red Cloud Chief*, November 21, 1918.

²⁹ *Webster County Argus*, November 28, 1918.

³⁰ “Dr. Stockman returns,” *Webster County Argus*, December 5, 1918.

³¹ *Red Cloud Chief*, December 5, 1918.

³² “City death record made in October,” *The Evening State Journal*, November 16, 1918.

³³ *Webster County Argus*, December 12, 1918.

considerable illness and death due to influenza and pneumonia during December of 1918.³⁴ Even the undertakers were ill in Red Cloud; fortunately there was more than one, so funerals could take place without too much disruption.³⁵

As noted previously, in December of 1918, health officials from all across the state gathered in Lincoln to discuss what to do about the influenza pandemic. Most rural communities in this study reported a favorable response to the conference, but that was far from unanimous in Webster County. Dr. J.W. Robinson from Guide Rock attended the conference and was unimpressed with health officials' deliberations. "About 200 men...attended this meeting. The doctor reports no definite action taken and in his opinion the meeting did little good except to draw a lot of people to Lincoln to spend their money...The general sense of the meeting was to the effect that about the only effective method of fighting the disease is to strictly quarantine any building where the disease is found."³⁶ Everyone knew this scenario was unlikely to be enforceable. In Red Cloud, where local physicians had been critical of the public health meeting, there was no publicized protest of any health measures; and the flu raged on.

³⁴ *Ibid*; *Webster County Argus*, December 19, 1918; *Red Cloud Chief*, December 5, 1918; *Red Cloud Chief*, December 12, 1918; *Red Cloud Chief*, December 19, 1918; *Red Cloud Chief*, December 26, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, December 13, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, December 18, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, December 20, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, December 23, 1918; *Commercial Advertiser*, December 25, 1918.

³⁵ *Commercial Advertiser*, December 30, 1918.

³⁶ *Webster County Argus*, December 26, 1918

CHAPTER FIVE: ANSELMO



Figure 12:
Main Street,
Anselmo,
Nebraska, 1905

Anselmo is located in the center of Nebraska in the eastern portion of the Sandhills. It is different from other communities in this study as it was not settled by pioneers, but created by the railroads. Anselmo began as a depot with switching facilities and a place where the Burlington and Missouri River Railroads could get water and fuel. The town was platted in 1886 by a civil engineer named Anselmo B. Smith, at the confluence of two dry rivers. Mr. Smith platted many towns across Nebraska, as he was a surveyor for the Lincoln Land Company. He enjoyed the beauty of the small valley so much, he requested it be named “Anselmo.”¹

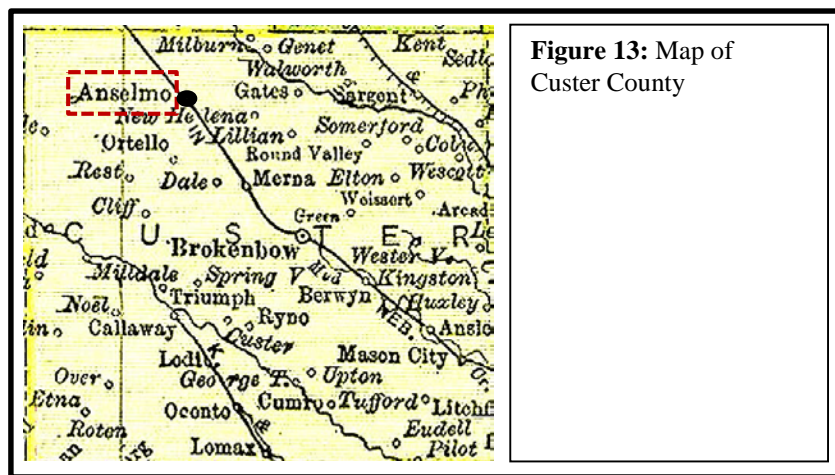


Figure 13: Map of
Custer County

¹ “Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Anselmo: Custer County” (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska at Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/custer/anselmo/index.php> (accessed February 8, 2015).

It was the railroad that drove the economy of tiny Anselmo, and its central location in the state helped it become a trading center for all the small communities and ranches of the region. In the 1880s, Custer County hosted the battle of the beef barons (ranchers) versus the homesteaders and by 1900 the homesteaders had won, turning what was once grasslands labeled “the Cattleman’s Paradise” into farming country.²

By 1910, Anselmo had a population of 351,³ and the population of Custer County was 26,688, 4.4% of whom were directly of German descent. This is a significant reduction from Wayne’s 26% German descendants, and even the 12% of Webster County had at that time. The counties examined so far in this study did not have another ethnic group that made up a significant portion of the population, until now. The second largest ethnic group after those of German heritage was those of Swedish descent, which made up 2.6% of the county’s population. Even more significantly, Custer County had 54 Negroes (census term), whereas Wayne County had one and Webster County reported six. Additionally there were 23 people of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese descent in Custer County; zero persons of these origins resided in either Wayne or Webster counties.⁴ The diversity is likely due to counting indigenous peoples, as well as the railroads bringing in migrant workers.

In 1918, Anselmo had one newspaper, *the Enterprise*. It was published weekly on Fridays, from 1908 through 1942. For a short while in 1938, the town also had a second newspaper, the *Anselmo News*.⁵ Since 1942, Anselmo has not had its own newspaper. In 1918, the *Enterprise* was small but mighty, declaring in large type, “This paper has been enlisted with the government in the

² “Custer county history” (Broken Bow, Nebraska: Custer County) <http://www.co.custer.ne.us/webpages/about/history.html> (accessed 10/11/2015).

³ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 54.

⁴ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 54, 66.

⁵ Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Adams to Ayr (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2009), http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/A-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed October 12, 2015).

cause of America for the period of the war.”⁶ Above the statement sat an eagle holding an American shield, sitting on a quill pen as if it were a tree branch, insinuating that the *Enterprise* was writing as the voice of America. This is a fine example of the rich symbolism and propaganda prevalent in World War I, as dictated by the Federal government.⁷ No other newspaper reviewed for this study, not even Lincoln’s *Evening State Journal*, had this designation.

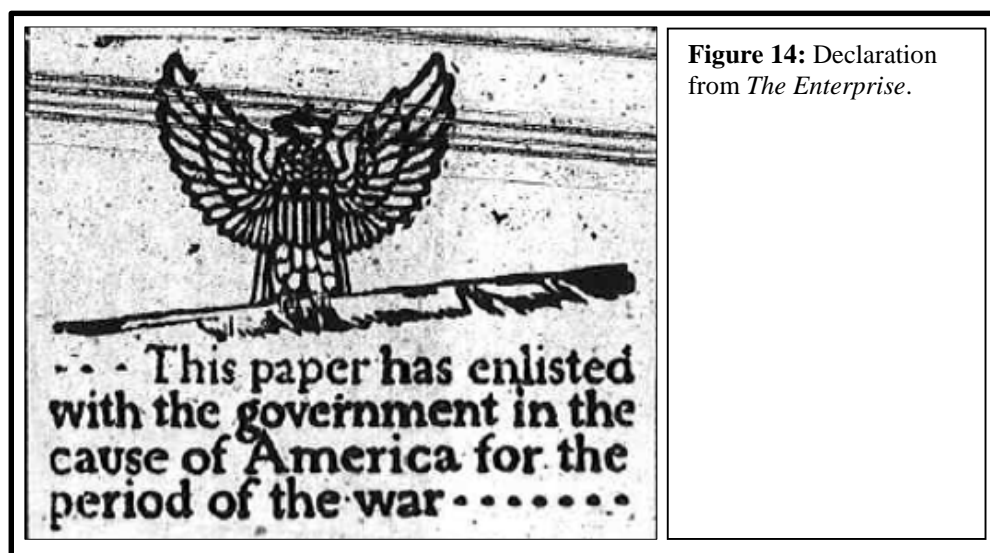


Figure 14: Declaration from *The Enterprise*.

Anselmo began October 1918 with reports of the flu elsewhere, in particular news of army camps. Influenza was moving rapidly through camps. Devens in Massachusetts reported that one in every four men had contracted the disease and 25% of cases turned into pneumonia. “All the sailors at the Great Lakes naval training station, Chicago, have been ordered to write home, saying they are alive. This is due to the sensational reports regarding conditions there.”⁸

The first death of an Anselmo resident did not occur in town, but in Omaha. Mr. Harrington, his wife and six children had just moved there to make a new life. Upon arrival, Mrs. Harrington contracted the disease and died within two days, before the family could even find a place to stay

⁶ *The Enterprise*, October 4, 1918.

⁷ Clayton Funk, “Popular Culture, Art Education, and the Committee on Public Information During World War I, 1915-1919,” *Visual Arts Research* 37, no. 1 (2011): 68-71.

⁸ *The Enterprise*, October 4, 1918.

permanently. The story had a level of personal grief not seen in previous newspapers. The obituary contained not only her status as a good citizen and mother, but also noted, "...she was a kind, refined lady, and those who knew her will remember her in those qualities."⁹ The same edition announced the cancellation of the Baptist convention in Omaha, triggering Omaha to enact a ban on public gatherings. Unlike Wayne and Red Cloud, there was no notice of a ban on public gatherings for Anselmo.

On October 19, officials decided, though there were no reported cases of influenza in Anselmo, there were many people under the care of the local physician, so it would be prudent to enact a ban on public gatherings and the closing of schools and churches. This did not slow down the harvest, and due to a warm week previously, the corn was "hurrying...to maturity."¹⁰

Reports from the end of October and early November note only one case of flu in Custer County, in Broken Bow, the county seat, and one death of a local boy from the flu at Camp Chester in Pennsylvania. Custer County received its cancellation notice for the draft, just as Wayne and Webster counties had, and the state ban on public gatherings would be lifted just in time for the November 5th election.¹¹ During the first two weeks of November, no local news about influenza was reported, only multiple advertisements for Vicks Vaporub, a new product at the time.¹²

Mid November, everything changed for the citizens of Anselmo and Custer County. The flu was back, and was more virulent than it had been during October. The outbreak was not heaviest in the towns, as would be expected, but was worse in the rural areas. Officials concluded it might not be the epidemic, but it was better to err on the side of caution, so schools were closed for the following

⁹ *The Enterprise*, October 11, 1918.

¹⁰ "To combat flu," *The Enterprise*, October 19, 1918.

¹¹ *The Enterprise*, October 25, 1918.

¹² *The Enterprise*, November 1, 1918; *The Enterprise*, November 8, 1918.

week, with hope that churches could hold services again the following Sunday.¹³ Later in the edition there would be multiple notices of entire families contracting and recovering from the flu. There would also be a double death announcement. Jay Gladsons suffered a tragic loss in his household. First his sister and then his infant child succumbed to the disease.¹⁴

The ravages of the flu were well documented in Anselmo, across Custer County, and across the state in the next two issues of the *Enterprise*. Schools in Anselmo would reopen after a five-week closure, but many rural schools remained closed due to either the illness of teachers or students. The passing of contagion is palpable in the pages of the newspaper as they report in multiple families one person succumbing to sickness just as the last one ill is feeling better. And as in Webster County, Dr. Kalar, local physician, finally came down with the flu after treating many of the influenza patients in the county, but he was thought to be recovering.¹⁵

December brought the greatest obituaries to Anselmo, as prominent local figures passed away from influenza. Mrs. John Bowley merited a half page obituary extolling her virtues as a wife and mother, as well as a citizen of the community.¹⁶ Mr. Harry Berry died in Wyoming, having left his young wife and family in Anselmo only seven days earlier. He traveled west to stake a claim in Wyoming. He was considered ideal for the rugged west, a man, "...in the prime of his life, not yet 30 years of age, of vigorous build and energetic character."¹⁷ He telephoned from the hospital in Wyoming, but the situation did not sound serious, until two days later when his wife received a wire that he had passed away.

¹³ "The influenza situation," *The Enterprise*, November 15, 1918.

¹⁴ *The Enterprise*, November 15, 1918.

¹⁵ *The Enterprise*, November 22, 1918; *The Enterprise*, November 29, 1918.

¹⁶ "Death of Mrs. John Bowley," *The Enterprise*, December 6, 1918.

¹⁷ "Harry Berry dies in Wyoming," *The Enterprise*, December 6, 1918.

The flu was worse in early December for Anselmo and Custer County than previous months. Anselmo tried to maintain school, but parents kept children home for fear of them contracting the flu at school and bringing it home. Teachers were "...watching closely for symptoms and any child showing the least indisposition is sent home at once."¹⁸

The flu did not ease until the end of December in Anselmo and Custer County, and the community was aware of the serious nature of the disease in the rural areas and the rest of the state. They expressed their appreciation for Anselmo's fate, "While we are not free from the disease by any means, we are thankful that all of the cases so far have terminated favorably here in town and fewer deaths in the immediate territory of Anselmo have occurred than in almost any other locality."¹⁹ The last paper before Christmas was full of death notices, not only from the flu, but reports of battlefield deaths of Custer County boys. The last week of fighting on the western front were the worst for Custer County of the entire war: five dead, one missing, and several wounded. The losses appeared heavier than those of other counties in Nebraska, "which goes to show our boys went right into the fray without asking questions."²⁰

As with most other newspapers in this study, the last paper of 1918 would report on the gathering of physicians in Lincoln to discuss the flu. Unlike Red Cloud, Anselmo towed the party line and even explicitly described the number of days allowed after the fever breaks before the person could be removed from isolation. Unlike Red Cloud, they saved the bad news of the fines until the final paragraph of the article.²¹ The detailed report published in Anselmo about the meeting in Lincoln was the only one examined in this study that included extensive details and recommended the most public health measures from the meeting. One recommendation exclusive to Anselmo's

¹⁸ "The flu situation," *The Enterprise*, December 6, 1918.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *The Enterprise*, December 13, 1918.

²¹ *The Enterprise*, December 27, 1918.

reporting included the formation of a nurse corps to work under the direction of each community's board of health.²²

The remainder of the paper would list multiple cases of influenza in all stages of recovery.²³ The arc of disease in Anselmo was much later than those of Wayne and Red Cloud, one can only imagine cases continued to be reported into the next year.

²² "Adopt measures to stamp out flu," *The Enterprise*, December 27, 1918.

²³ *The Enterprise*, December 27, 1918.

CHAPTER SIX: VALENTINE

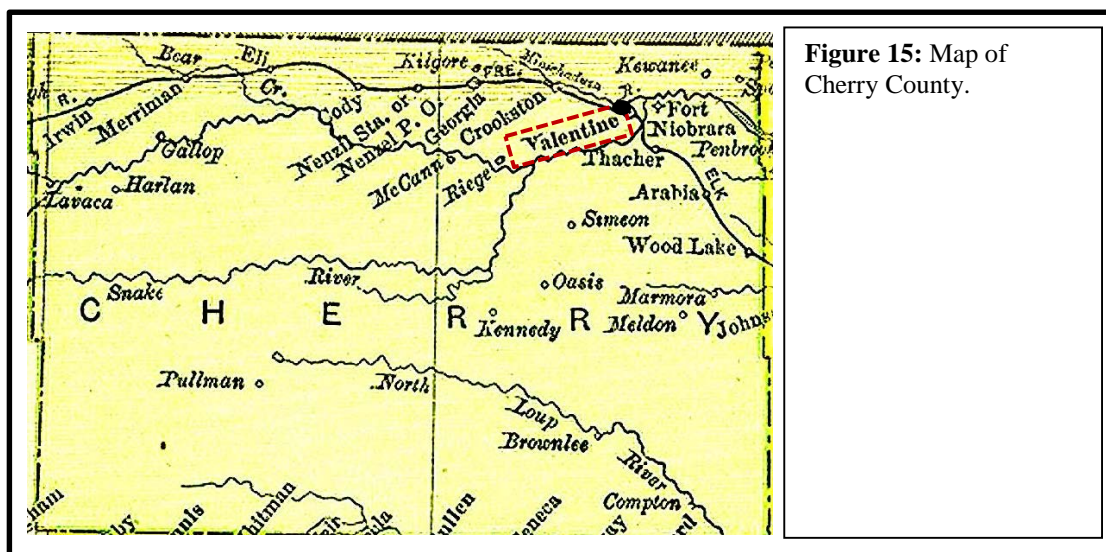


Figure 15: Map of Cherry County.

Valentine is located in the north central portion of Nebraska in Cherry County, part of the Sandhills. The Federal government erected Fort Niobrara in 1879 in what was originally part of Holt County, east of Cherry County, prior to its incorporation. The Fort's primary purpose was to serve as peace keeper for the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Indian reservations, located west of Valentine. Upon the election of Congressman E.K. Valentine in 1882, the new settlement was named Valentine in his honor.¹ Cherry is the largest geographic county in Nebraska, covering nearly 6,000 square miles, and could fit the combined states of Delaware, Connecticut, and Rhode Island within its borders.² The population in 1910 was 10,414, fewer than two persons per square mile, a very different and isolated scenario from all previous counties examined.³ Citizens of tiny Anselmo (population 351) had more neighbors than anyone residing in Cherry County. Even though total population was low, Valentine grew quickly, and with rapid expansion came lawlessness and the advent of the Wild West. Valentine

¹ "Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Valentine: Cherry County" (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska at Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/cherry/valentine/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

² "Cherry County" (Valentine, Nebraska: Cherry County, 2015) <http://www.co.cherry.ne.us/webpages/about/about.html> (accessed 10/12/2015); Alan Boye, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1939) 313-316.

³ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 52.

was soon known as the toughest town in Nebraska. Eventually a gun law was enacted, and by 1886, you had to leave your gun at the door of the saloon.⁴ By 1910, Valentine had grown to a population of 1,338, and was the only town in Cherry County that had greater than 800 people.⁵

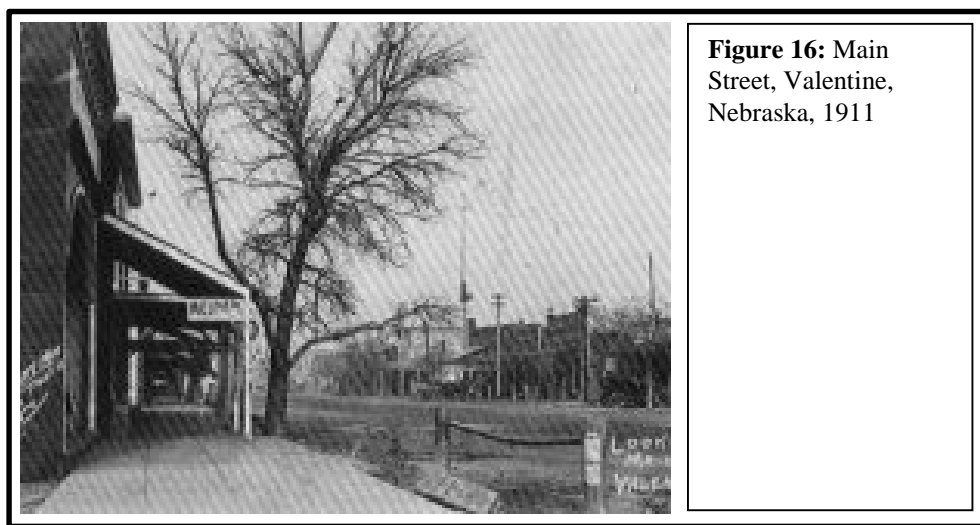


Figure 16: Main Street, Valentine, Nebraska, 1911

In 1910, Germans made up 7.3% of Cherry County's population, still the single largest ethnic group in the county. Cherry was the second most racially diverse county examined in this study. A large number of Native Americans and Negroes lived in Cherry County, 80 in each group, totaling 160 persons or 1% of the population. Not even Custer County came close to this amount of ethnic diversity.⁶ Only Scotts Bluff County would have more racial diversity with 1.4% of the population being of color, including a significant Japanese population.⁷

In 1918, Valentine had three newspapers: the *Valentine Democrat* (*Democrat*), the *Republican* (*Republican*), and the *Searchlight*. Only the *Democrat* and *Republican* were reviewed for this study, as no complete source for the *Searchlight* was identified: it was only published from

⁴ "Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Valentine: Cherry County" (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/cherry/valentine/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

⁵ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 26.

⁶ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 52.

⁷ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 64.

September 1913 through August 1918 so did not meet the criteria for the study. The *Republican* began publication in 1888 and was printed through 1950 running weekly on Thursdays; the *Democrat* began publication in 1897 and stayed in print until 1930, editions published weekly on Fridays.⁸ The *Democrat* followed closely the politics and philosophies of William Jennings Bryan in the early 1900s, and published more information about cattle brands than any other newspaper, often giving multiple page spreads to stockmen's cattle. Features were also given to "threshing buckwheat, cutting corn, and housekeeping."⁹

By October 10, newspapers reported no cases of influenza apparent yet in Valentine, but the situation out of control in Omaha, with reports of as many as 2,500 cases occurring per day. Consistent with reports from other communities in this study, Valentine reported considerable illness in army camps in multiple states where Nebraska boys were stationed.¹⁰ The following day, the *Republican* announced that more than six residents of Valentine had influenza, one case serious.¹¹ The following week would have twice that number in town and five in the country, still considerably fewer than in areas to the west of Valentine.¹² The city issued quarantine orders and stopped public gatherings on Saturday October 12, 1918, preventing church services and school the following week. A truncated version of the State Department of Health's warning was published in both papers, but key items included were: no spitting on the sidewalk and no sharing of the common drinking cup.¹³

⁸ "Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Valentine to Virginia" (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2009), http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/V-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed October 16, 2015).

⁹ "Valentine Democrat" (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Lincoln) <http://nebnewspapers.unl.edu/newspaper/paper/sn95069780/60/1020> (accessed April 13, 2015).

¹⁰ *Valentine Democrat*, October 10, 1918.

¹¹ "Influenza at work" *Republican*, October 11, 1918.

¹² "Twelve cases of 'flu' in Valentine" *Valentine Democrat*, October 17, 1918.

¹³ "Spanish Influenza" *Valentine Democrat*, October 17, 1918; "Spanish Influenza" *Republican*, October 18, 1918.

The *Republican* expounded on the extent of the ban on public gatherings, extolling the success of keeping cases under control in Valentine, with no fatal case to date, although a Valentine boy had passed away at Camp Dodge, Iowa, due to the influenza.¹⁴ The *Republican* would first publish the stock article “Uncle Sam’s Advice on Flu,” complete with cartoon and slogan, “coughs and sneezes spread diseases,” and another week before the *Democrat* would publish the same notice.¹⁵

In one short week the death toll began to rise in Valentine: two deaths on one Sunday night, October 20th and three the same night in one family in the nearby town of Wood Lake. Though Valentine was reported as not having as many cases as other places, community members took the disease very seriously; the newspaper offered an impassioned declaration, “. . .but it is a fact that this is the most terrible scourge that has ever visited our people, and it is no time to attempt to minimize the danger or to conceal the true facts.”¹⁶ As with Anselmo and Red Cloud, Valentine and Cherry County were convinced that their ban on public gatherings was the reason for the low case rate. Their sense of personal responsibility was strong, “. . .anyone who has the slightest cold or feels a little out of fix should take very good care of themselves and not mix with others.”¹⁷ In two other places in the same edition, small sentences of personal responsibility were inserted into the paper, as if a wise aunt were reminding citizens multiple times to behave.¹⁸ Though church was cancelled, the need for worship was palpable, especially in light of the death of community members from the dreaded disease. An industrious and compassionate soul named Mrs. Palmer took it upon herself and traveled to individual homes in the country providing spiritual support, as well as personally reading the services for the flu victims buried that week. This is the first evidence reported of specific acts of

¹⁴ “Public meetings banned” *Republican*, October 18, 1918.

¹⁵ *Republican*, October 18, 1918; “Uncle Sam’s advice on flu” *Valentine Democrat*, October 24, 1918.

¹⁶ “Influenza epidemic very serious – two deaths here” *Valentine Democrat*, October 24, 1918.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Valentine Democrat*, October 24, 1918.

service to heal the community in light of the flu. Previously proclamations were made by health officials and civic leaders, but no individual acts of kindness were recorded. In fact, the story most similar in intensity to the one of compassion in Valentine and Cherry County was the one from Wayne regarding the violence against German pastors.¹⁹

As with all other communities in this study, illness in army camps kept Cherry County boys from being deployed to camps in the United States to prepare for the Great War's battlefield. Contrary to other communities where recruits were posted to Iowa and Kansas, the Cherry County contingent were being sent to California. It is apparent that disappointment in the draft cancellation sprang not only from not having the opportunity to serve the country, but also to miss out on California sunshine while those in Nebraska had snow.²⁰

By October 25, 1918, the influenza was raging in Cherry County, with newspapers begrudgingly revealing more than 100 cases of influenza, and five deaths within the past few days. Bad news was interspersed with optimism as Red Cross nurses were assigned to care for the sick in the region. All three physicians in the county were down with the flu, and it was noted there were no physicians for a large portion of the territory, including none available to serve Cody or Merriman, Nebraska, or Mission, South Dakota. This edition also announced the cancellation of a hog auction due to the flu, not even the quality of the hogs could attract attendees. Farmers and ranchers gave up building barns and began harvesting early due to the scarcity of those well enough to work.²¹

November brought the death of the town barber, "Frosty," and a question as to who would now provide this service. Newspapers would whisper the angel of death had settled heavily on the nearby small town of Gordon, and on both the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian reservations. No one speculated on how many deaths actually occurred, but, "the *Gordon Journal* was well filled with

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Influenza again stops draft selects" *Republican*, October 25, 1918.

²¹ *Republican*, October 25, 1918.

obituary notices last week and many deaths have been reported since that time.”²² It was believed that Gordon was the hardest hit community in northern Nebraska. The number of Indians lost on the two reservations was unknown; six death notices for residents of Gordon and the reservations followed the somber declaration in the paper. “Strictly private funerals have been held for these flu victims, short burial services being read at the graves by a minister.”²³ The paper published as many obituaries as it could, but stated more would be published later, due to lack of space in the current edition.

The *Democrat* was first to publish a most extraordinary story and obituary of a Cherry County flu hero. His name was Daniel Garner, and he was a local rancher. He had a ranch house located 50 miles from his home. Upon learning that six of his hands had contracted influenza, and owing to the lack of nurses, he went to his ranch house and cared for the men himself. His wife visited frequently, but he never allowed her in the bunkhouse; they would converse only through the window. Eventually, Daniel contracted the disease and died a week later, his wife at his side for his final hours. Only the quarantine kept the funeral from being one of the largest ever in the county. His virtues were extolled by his business partner and he was buried with the full honors of the Masonic order of the Arcana Lodge. Mr. Garner’s stature in the community, and the life saving measures he took for others, told a tale of bravery and courage not related in other counties, one so significant that a full length article reading exactly the same ran in both newspapers. There were a couple of other citizens whose obituaries were listed in both newspapers, but primarily obituaries were either reported in one paper or the other.²⁴

In Valentine, by the first week of November 1918, the Red Cross had opened a makeshift hospital in a Presbyterian manse, and a second temporary hospital; both were running at full capacity. The Federal government sent Dr. Carter to assist with the crisis, and it was said, “he and the local

²² “The Spanish Influenza here” *Valentine Democrat*, October 31, 1918.

²³ *Valentine Democrat*, October 31, 1918.

²⁴ *Valentine Democrat*, October 31, 1918; *Republican*, November 1, 1918.

men of the profession are doing heroic work.”²⁵ Because it was more effective for physicians to operate at the hospitals, people were brought into town in cars. In some instances, when help arrived at their homes, families were found with loved ones already dead.

The Federally stationed physician in Valentine operated out of a makeshift hospital but many local physicians tended their patients who resided in the most remote rural areas. Dr. Compton, a local physician, and his driver George Hauver, tried to reach folks in the countryside. They had been driving non-stop since September 17. The driver reported that what they witnessed was so horrible, due to the sickness and death that more than once both he and the physician had broken down in remorse under the strain of what they saw.²⁶

In other communities across the state an election was held Tuesday, November 5, 1918. There was no mention of an election, or a repeal on public gatherings, for that date in either Valentine or Cherry County.

The second week of November did not go well for Valentine. There had been 10 new deaths since the previous week, though the disease did appear to be slowing in the number of new cases.²⁷ The *Democrat* would relay a litany of miniature obituaries, one sentence truths about each citizen that died and often where in town that person passed away, at the hospital, at home, or at the home of a relative. One obituary included an infant as passing, almost an afterthought to the story of his father’s death. The list became a fractured portrayal of the erosion of the community by the dreaded disease.²⁸

Armistice was declared Monday, November 11, 1918, but there was little celebration in Valentine. The tragic nature of the flu affected everything, and even a half-hearted effort to assemble a band and play patriotic music was eventually discarded. More than one person in town died of the

²⁵ “The Influenza” *Valentine Democrat*, November 7, 1918.

²⁶ “Getting upper hand on the flu” *Republican*, November 8, 1918.

²⁷ “10 deaths but few new cases” *Valentine Democrat*, November 14, 1918.

²⁸ *Valentine Democrat*, November 14, 1918.

flu that Monday. The weekly issue of the *Republican* shared a very unusual story of the flu, a story not to be related anywhere else in the state. A young Indian man from the Rosebud Reservation died of influenza at Camp Dodge, Iowa. A participant at his funeral wrote a letter to the *New York Times*, so that the entire country could see the pride of the Indian and how he was revered in death for his service to the United States. Despite a ban on public gatherings, a large crowd of Indians gathered at a small Indian cemetery out on the Dakota prairie. A short service was conducted at the soldier's father's house; then the procession set out for the cemetery. The American flag flew from a pole and had been there since the news of the young man's death had reached the reservation. Each of the Indian pallbearers had almost qualified for military service (they were denied primarily for medical reasons) and had red, white and blue streamers pinned to their lapels. An Indian brave on a horse rode at the front of the procession, carrying another American flag, followed by a car carrying the body of the young soldier. What followed was a menagerie of cars, horses, and wagons, with the sounds of native death chants emanating from all of them. The writer of the letter was so moved, she told the *New York Times*, "I cannot think that any more impressive military funeral cortege ever passed along a highway than moved that day over the far Dakota prairies."²⁹

Due to the serious nature and prevalence of sickness in Valentine and Cherry County, there was a very different environment from that in other rural communities examined in this study. Though it was impossible to find health records and mortality numbers from rural Nebraska during the epidemic, newspapers provided anecdotal information. In trying to comfort the population, reporters in Valentine relayed that the mortality rate was about 2.5% for the pandemic, with about one in every 40 people dying. They asked the public to recall an outbreak of a few years previous where scarlet fever had a 50% mortality rate. Now was a time to be reasonable and calm about the disease, as needless worry might also bring on the influenza.³⁰

²⁹ "Indians honor son who died in service" *Republican*, November 15, 1918.

³⁰ *Republican*, November 15, 1918.

November wore on and obituaries continued to fill both newspapers. Declarations that the flu was subsiding with multiple obituaries following the notice, clued the reader to the positive spin papers put on a desperate situation, trying to keep the community optimistic. Losing the barber to the flu created a shaggy community, but a much greater blow occurred when Valentine lost one of its main undertakers. He did not die of influenza, but perhaps the pandemic indirectly caused his death. George Hernby died of blood poisoning; a tiny sand burr spine became lodged in his hand, and due to a significantly increased work load, made up primarily of influenza victims, the infection was not allowed to heal. It quickly worsened and led to his death within a few days.³¹ Valentine faced the same crisis seen so far only in crowded communities like Omaha and Lincoln; services were diminished, infrastructure broke down, and the community could not operate under normal conditions. Not even a ban on public gatherings or quarantine placards could stop the flu from ravaging Cherry County.

The ban on public gatherings was lifted on Friday, November 29, 1918. Church resumed, but school was still closed as a precautionary measure.³² The *Republican's* article on the lifting of the quarantine was a propaganda piece advocating for the decision of city officials, citing no new cases of flu in the past week, no new deaths, and a decreasing hospital population. To reinforce this stance, Dr. Lynch, physician on the community board of health stated,

“...quarantining of cases helps in keeping down the spread of the disease, but must not be expected to be all-sufficient. The mild cases of the disease, whose victims are scarcely aware that they are suffering from it, are the ones that spread it. When a person has the influenza severely, nature causes a natural quarantine by sending

³¹ “George H. Hernby dies from blood poisoning” *Valentine Democrat*, November 21, 1918.

³² “Ban to raise Friday night” *Valentine Democrat*, November 28, 1918.

the patient to bed, but it is the walking cases which continue to spread the disease, and this can hardly be avoided.”³³

This independent statement from a board of health is the only one in the study that does not represent text that was issued by state or Federal health officials.

The same edition that justified the removal of the ban on public gatherings made a case for Cherry County to have the Red Cross establish a permanent hospital in Valentine. The article discusses the lack of preparedness of the county to handle even the normal challenges of daily life, not to mention the challenges of war or an epidemic. The use of the term preparedness is the first seen in historic documents in this study. Now commonly used, in 1918, that term was not often mentioned at a state or Federal level.³⁴

Even though the ban on public gatherings was lifted, obituaries continued to surface in December for influenza victims. School was called off until after the winter holidays, and some churches opted to keep their doors closed even without a ban.³⁵ The pandemic was clearly still present as articles continued to be issued by the Red Cross and the U.S. Public Health Service discussing the proper treatment and nursing for influenza, as well as to watch for tuberculosis after flu cases.³⁶

Despite a flurry of tragic obituaries, the community declared that the flu was gone from Valentine.³⁷ Ironically, one of the most tragic obituaries is that of a young nurse, “...wishing to be of service, and counting not her life dear unto herself, she entered the fray only to become herself the

³³ “Influenza ban is now lifted” *Republican*, November 29, 1918.

³⁴ “Red Cross presents hospital plan” *Republican*, November 29, 1918.

³⁵ *Valentine Democrat*, December 5, 1918; *Republican*, December 6, 1918; *Valentine Democrat*, December 12, 1918; *Republican*, December 13, 1918.

³⁶ “Advice to ‘flu’ convalescents” *Valentine Democrat*, December 5, 1918; “Safeguarding the Home” *Republican*, December 6, 1918.

³⁷ *Valentine Democrat*, December 19, 1918; *Republican*, December 20, 1918.

victim of the dread disease.”³⁸ The edition would detail at least four more deaths of people in their 20s succumbing to influenza, and experts agreed they knew nothing more about influenza than they did at the beginning of the epidemic. Between a national convention in Chicago and a state discussion in Lincoln, “it was the unanimous conclusion of the medical men that the cause of the disease was unknown and that little had been learned as to its prevention and cure thus far.”³⁹

By December 20, 1918, the Red Cross hospital in Valentine was closed and in the process of being dismantled. Apparently, the plea to have a hospital in Cherry County would go unheeded, likely due to insufficient funding and scarceness of other resources.⁴⁰

December ended in Valentine with a white Christmas, so white that ice and snow took down some telephone lines, causing another disruption to infrastructure and normal life. Another Cherry County newspaper, the *Cherry County Messenger*, published in Kilgore, had been unable to print an edition in the past three weeks owing to all staffers being out with the flu. The paper solicited the help of other publishers and had caught up on one missed issue.⁴¹ The *Republican* would announce, “the complete disappearance of the influenza,” from Valentine and the hope that schools would reopen again in January 1919.⁴² No obituaries from the flu were published in the last papers of 1918 in Valentine, Nebraska.

³⁸ “Obituary Martha Bryant” *Valentine Democrat*, December 19, 1918.

³⁹ “Flu is gone” *Republican*, December 20, 1918.

⁴⁰ “Notice” *Valentine Democrat*, December 19, 1918; “Hospital is closed” *Republican*, December 20, 1918.

⁴¹ *Valentine Democrat*, December 26, 1918.

⁴² *Republican*, December 27, 1918.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GERING/SCOTTSSLUFF

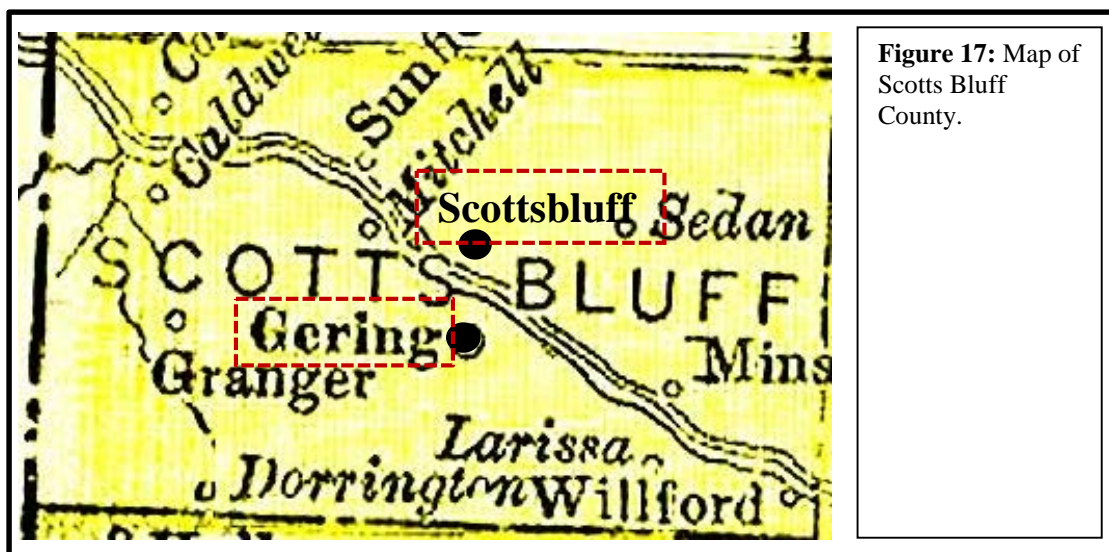


Figure 17: Map of Scotts Bluff County.

Gering and Scottsbluff are twin cities located in the western portion of Nebraska in the panhandle. Gering is located on the south bank, and Scottsbluff on the north bank of the North Platte River.¹ In 1918, each town had a distinct character, one larger and wilder (Scottsbluff), the other older and more refined (Gering). The location for Gering was chosen based on a survey by the Union Pacific Railroad and founded in its current location in 1887. Much to Gering's dismay, railroad tracks were not laid on the south side of the river until 1910, but were located on the north side of the river prior to 1900, driving the growth on the north bank in Scottsbluff. Gering was founded to help establish a county seat and other towns vied for the honor, until Gering promised to build a bridge across the North Platte River. The vote went to Gering and a bridge was built bringing commerce to both sides of the North Platte River. Train tracks laid on the north side of the river created Scottsbluff in 1899, boasting a store, hotel, and weekly newspaper. Both communities had thriving sugar beet businesses, some of which still operate today²

¹ "Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: the twin cities Gering and Scottsbluff: Scotts Bluff County" (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Lincoln) <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/scottsbluff/scottsbluff-gering/index.php/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

² *Ibid.*

In 1910, the population of Gering was 1,610 and Scottsbluff was 2,373.³ Unlike any other county in this study, Germans did not make up the single largest ethnic group in the county, but represented the second largest ethnic group: 3% of Scottsbluff County's population in 1910 was of German descent. Comprising 5% of the population, people of Russian heritage made up the largest ethnic group in Scottsbluff County. As in Valentine, there were a large number of Native Americans in Scotts Bluff County, 105, as well as 16 Negroes. This significant number made up 1.4% of the local citizenship, making Scotts Bluff County the most racially diverse county in this study.⁴

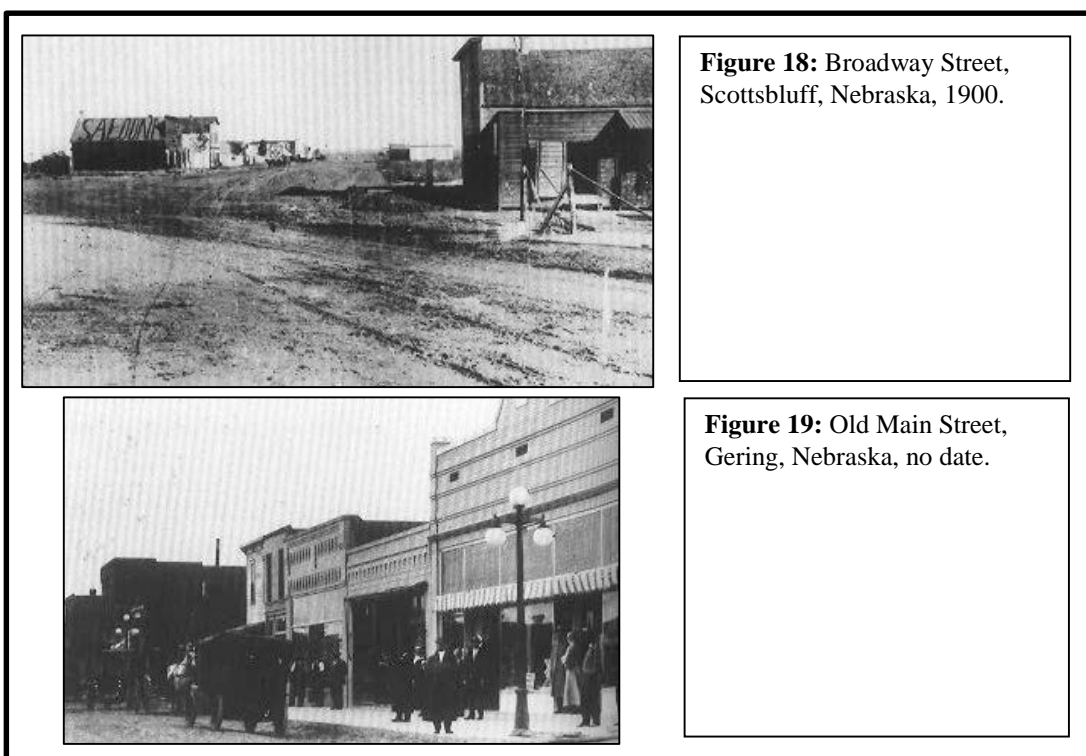


Figure 18: Broadway Street, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 1900.

Figure 19: Old Main Street, Gering, Nebraska, no date.

In 1918, Gering and Scottsbluff each had its own newspaper. The *Gering Courier* (*Courier*) began publication in 1887 and was printed through 1999, running weekly on Fridays. The *Scottsbluff*

³ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 63.

⁴ United States Federal Government, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census 1910), 64.

Star-Herald (*Star-Herald*) began publication in 1912 and remained in print until 1962; it had two editions published weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays.⁵

Early reports of the flu in October 1918 called it “the same old grippe” that was seen in the 1890s. Reminders from the Public Health Service informed community members that human contact spread the disease, “...attention to cleanliness of the mouth, adequate ventilation, avoidance of exposure to cold, and isolation from those who may be carriers of virulent germs are measures advisable to prevent complications.”⁶ No cases of the flu were reported yet in Scotts Bluff County.

Scottsbluff had the distinct honor of putting in place all restrictions on public gatherings, closing of schools and rules for quarantine placarding homes before any cases were reported in the community. The rules for reporting cases were explicit. Instructions laid out in the newspaper directed how business transactions were to occur quickly in stores and buyers to return to the open air as expediently as possible. The preservation of commerce was as detailed a portion of the article as was remaining home when ill. Ironically, pool halls were not closed, just pool tables screened off, so patrons could still purchase cigars and soft drinks, preserving the business’s economy. As with all communities examined in this study, personal responsibility was stressed and expected.⁷

Scottsbluff followed the state health department recommendations and by October 11, 1918, influenza was a reportable disease. In Gering, the *Courier* had a different focus and discussed the upcoming music performances to benefit the Red Cross, as well as other social and societal news, with a scandalous divorce featured on the front page. There was no discussion of influenza or health precautions.⁸

⁵ “Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Gandy to Guide Rock” (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2009), http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/G-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed October 18, 2015); “Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Salem to Syracuse” (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2009), http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/S-Inventory-1.pdf (accessed October 18, 2015).

⁶ “The Spanish flu” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 4, 1918.

⁷ “City takes precautions against ‘Spanish Flu’” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 11, 1918.

⁸ *Gering Courier*, October 11, 1918.

Within a few days, reports from the county poured in and the *Star-Herald* announced five deaths confirmed from influenza, and between three hundred and five hundred cases present in the countryside. As soon as the disease became reportable, the true picture in Scotts Bluff Country appeared. Disease spread rapidly and indiscriminately in the county. Scottsbluff noted 70 cases; Gering acknowledged 25 to 30 cases.⁹ The epidemic arrived and the public were asked to, "...obey instructions and meet the situation without panic."¹⁰

Finally, near the end of October, the *Courier* acknowledged that Gering was part of the epidemic. Committed to social and salacious news until now, the newspaper had no choice but to report on the flu. Seven deaths had occurred in the county, and two local soldiers died of the flu at army camps. The devastation could no longer be ignored.¹¹

A striking headline captured the sentiment of the community, "Angel of death visits many Scottsbluff homes: epidemic of influenza and consequent pneumonia responsible for saddening of city."¹² The same edition would announce the cancellation of the draft due to influenza at army camps. Scotts Bluff would, as every other county in this study, no longer send troops off to war. And reports indicated the epidemic was increasing, not decreasing. As with Cherry County, there were no rural hospitals, and hotels were turned into hospitals to try to accommodate all the sick. House calls were made on families, and in multiple instances seven or more family members were sick, parents and children alike, with no one well enough to care for any of the others. Physicians and nurses in Scottsbluff were as overwhelmed as in Omaha and Lincoln and expressed that it would be impossible to know the number of cases at present as so many people became sick every day.¹³

⁹ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 15, 1918.

¹⁰ "Spanish 'Flu' in the country" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 15, 1918.

¹¹ *Gering Courier*, October 18, 1918.

¹² "Angel of death visits many Scottsbluff homes" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 22, 1918.

¹³ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 22, 1918.

Four deaths occurred October 23rd and 24th in Scottsbluff, and local health officials declared the apex of the disease had been reached. This echoed the voice of the state health department, but did not reflect actual conditions in Scotts Bluff County. Physicians stated they did not think cases were increasing, but were not sure they were decreasing, as all communities still had many cases.¹⁴

An event singular to Scottsbluff in this study occurred late in October, 1918. Thirty-four local businesses signed a petition to put a stop to the closing of the central business district as a response to the ban on public gatherings. This was an extreme and unnecessary measure, too drastic in their opinion; “before this should be done a more strict quarantine should be placed on the homes in which Spanish Influenza has entered.”¹⁵ After much discussion, the city council allowed the downtown businesses to stay open, providing they posted signs asking customers to hurry along after their transactions. The council determined that even though Alliance had put such a restriction on their business district, Scottsbluff served the needs of a much larger number of communities and territories, creating the need for businesses to stay open.¹⁶

Scottsbluff again made an unprecedented move by publishing a large article on the center of the front page of the *Star-Herald* asking for citizens to volunteer for the Red Cross and become nurses. Between 15 and 18 women had tended all the influenza cases in the county so far, but cases continued to increase and the women could not keep up.¹⁷ Juxtaposed with the plea for nurses was the “startling figures” in the influenza battle in Scottsbluff alone; more than 1,200 cases, 256 new cases appeared in the last week, and at least 14 deaths.¹⁸ There would be no mention in either newspaper of

¹⁴ *Gering Courier*, October 25, 1918; *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 25, 1918.

¹⁵ “Health board job says city council” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 25, 1918.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “An appeal for help” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 1, 1918.

¹⁸ “Startling figures shown by epidemic in this city” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 1, 1918.

an election the following Tuesday, nor would anyone ask to have the ban on public gatherings lifted to hold a political gathering.¹⁹

Tuesday, November 5 brought a clamoring to the Scotts Bluff area, and it had nothing to do with politics. Citizens of Scottsbluff and the surrounding region requested more stringent quarantine regulations, asking the board of health, "...to have the city policed as to do away with the congregating of people upon the streets or in the stores."²⁰ Nearly 100 cases were appearing every night. The Methodist Church donated their facility and the Red Cross created another hospital, begging citizens to come volunteer for the crisis. Seven more obituaries from the flu filled the pages of the newspaper, and a "death record" was declared for the past four days.²¹ Later the same week the epidemic was declared as waning because there were approximately ten fewer cases appearing per day. The same issue announced nine new deaths in the past few days, and a make-shift hospital was set up in Gering on the upper floor of the Troy Building. Journalists attempted optimism, but it was difficult to achieve.²²

November moved on in Scotts Bluff County to the steady beat of the death knell. Papers were full of tiny obituaries, so many that large articles were reserved only for citizens of community stature: W.L. Bryan a city leader and 32nd degree Mason, Clark Robinson, the town of Mitchell's superintendent of schools. The urgency to report influenza cases was stressed by the United States Public Health Service, whose scrutiny of Nebraska caused Dr. Wild, Public Health Director of the State of Nebraska, to examine the records of Scotts Bluff County. As of November 12, no reports had been submitted for the county, yet the state was well aware the situation in the panhandle was dire.²³

¹⁹ *Gering Courier*, November 1, 1918; *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 1, 1918.

²⁰ "Citizens ask for rigid quarantine" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 5, 1918.

²¹ "Death record for past four days" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 5, 1918.

²² *Gering Courier*, November 5, 1918; *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 5, 1918.

²³ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 12, 1918.

The *Courier* continued to have little coverage of the flu, and offered tame headlines like, “Quarantine not to be lifted as yet,”²⁴ while the *Star-Herald* had devastating headlines like, “Death continues its grim harvest.”²⁵ Multiple deaths were related in both papers; all had occurred just prior to November 15, nine more in Scottsbluff in the past few days, and three new deaths in Gering. Multiple new cases were reported throughout the county, though numbers of cases had begun to lessen.²⁶

As November progressed, influenza cases finally began to abate, first in Gering, then in Scottsbluff, and then in the rural areas. Death records continued to be made almost daily, even with a slow but steady decline in cases. Stories continued to be tragic: one family lost two sons, another, two daughters, in one day to the flu. Preventive health measures remained in place, but the flu created sickness regardless of community efforts.²⁷

Just prior to Thanksgiving, Scottsbluff enacted stricter quarantine rules. Doorkeepers were placed at shop doors and allowed only as many people in as there were clerks to serve them. Most people obeyed, but it was suggested doorkeepers be given something more than a piece of paper to claim their authority; a badge was proposed as a solution.²⁸ Well persons with placarded houses could no longer move about; they were forced to stay home as they had been exposed to the disease. Only physicians and nurses were allowed to move about freely.²⁹

²⁴ “Quarantine not to be lifted as yet” *Gering Courier*, November 15, 1918.

²⁵ “Death continues its grim harvest” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 15, 1918.

²⁶ *Gering Courier*, November 15, 1918; *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 15, 1918.

²⁷ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 19, 1918; *Gering Courier*, November 22, 1918; *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 22, 1918.

²⁸ “Epidemic figures rather hopeful” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 26, 1918.

²⁹ “Quarantine sick says U.S. Surgeon” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 26, 1918; “More rigid health orders are issued” *Gering Courier*, November 29, 1918.

Official reports from the local board of health showed that cases of influenza had slowed significantly, and for all purposes, within the limits of Scottsbluff, deaths had ceased. However, an area of Russian immigrants outside of town still had, "...thirteen [cases] per day in Russia Town...and seven per day average in the city proper."³⁰

Revealed by the newspaper, not by the census, Scottsbluff had a contingent of Japanese immigrants present to work on the railroad, sugar beet, and potato farms. Apparently, the last week of November was the deadliest for the Japanese community, with four deaths and more than 20 people needing hospitalization. This caused the Red Cross to reopen the hospital at the Methodist Church.³¹

Simultaneously, the *Courier* would state the "Grim Reaper is harvesting many,"³² and the *Star-Herald* would proclaim, "'Flu' situation is greatly improved."³³ They would both be correct, as the deaths from the flu had slowed considerably, but there were still at least five deaths reported, including migrant workers of Japanese, Mexican, and Russian descent. These editions would also contain the two funniest articles examined in this study.

The *Star-Herald* sought to squelch "Old Dame Rumor and her stories of maladies in Scottsbluff." A writer for the paper expressed how cruel it was to "broadcast throughout the county...the wild story that the city of Scottsbluff was overwhelmed with diphtheria, smallpox, spinal meningitis, measles, mumps, blind staggers, thumps, pip, and in fact every other disease save possibly leprosy and the bubonic plague."³⁴ It was followed by the defense that Scottsbluff did have a difficult time during the epidemic, but there were only two cases of smallpox and the rest of the disease was

³⁰ "Little change in past three days" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 29, 1918.

³¹ "Three Japanese buried yesterday" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 3, 1918.

³² "Grim Reaper is harvesting many" *Gering Courier*, December 6, 1918.

³³ "'Flu' situation is greatly improved" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 6, 1918.

³⁴ "A Wild, Wild Woman" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 6, 1918.

influenza and pneumonia. The article had the defensive tone of a high school student responding to a mean taunt.

It was dignified Gering that would suffer the most humorous event of December 1918, albeit dark humor. A store called Davidson's had advertised for weeks the arrival of Santa Claus on Monday, December 2. On that day, Santa Claus arrived via the Union Pacific Railroad and was met at the train station by Davidson and a swarm of children. It appeared that the quarantine regulations had stiffened since Santa was first booked, but he had not been informed of the change. Davidson and Santa Claus walked from the train station to the store, surrounded by throngs of children, and the Chief of Police arrested both men half a block from the store for quarantine violations, owing to the large gathering. In front of hundreds of children, Santa was stripped of his beard and mask, revealing Citizen Babcock. The children were shocked as Babcock and Davidson were taken away and fined. The children soon forgot Santa's secret identity and began a collection to pay his fine.³⁵

By December 10, 1918, Scottsbluff and Gering wanted to reopen for business. Flu cases had all but disappeared although housing placarding was to remain in place; citizens felt safe from the flu. The city physician for Scottsbluff wired Lincoln asking Dr. Wild's permission to lift the ban. The response from Lincoln was to wait a week and send representatives to Lincoln on December 17 and the state health directors would decide together.³⁶ This limbo lasted approximately two days before insistent business owners in both Scottsbluff and Gering forced health officials to repeal the ban on public gatherings. "It is understood that the ban has been lifted in response to insistent importunities from interests concerned in money making rather than a result of the deliberate judgment of those who should know best from a hygienic standpoint."³⁷ Regardless of circumstance, the repeal of the ban allowed life in Scotts Bluff County to resume to normal, newspapers announcing in large letters,

³⁵ "Santa Claus forgot quarantine rules" *Gering Courier*, December 6, 1918.

³⁶ "City health board facing puzzle" *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 10, 1918.

³⁷ "Flu lid is lifted" *Gering Courier*, December 13, 1918.

“the ban is raised we are ready for a PUBLIC SALE!”³⁸ School was closed until January, so shopping and getting out about town were a focus of the news, with pool halls and theatres running “full blast.”³⁹

As Christmas drew near, only single obituaries due to influenza and pneumonia appeared in newspapers. The stories of seven sick in a family were gone, and the community was again able to focus on the few who passed.⁴⁰ Lincoln health officials recommended re-enacting the ban on public gatherings, but no one in Scottsbluff or Gering could see the use in it.⁴¹

The only portion of the ban remaining in Scotts Bluff County was the placarding and quarantining of homes of the sick. The rules were re-published in both the *Star-Herald* and the *Courier*, with the notation of a stiff penalty of a one hundred dollar fine and/or 30 days in jail for violating anyone of the quarantine rules.⁴²

School resumed on Monday, December 30, after nearly three months of being closed due to the influenza. Three of the teachers had moved on during the break and secured other employment. Those spots were yet to be filled by the end of December and the paper asked that any eligible teachers please contact the schools as soon as possible.⁴³

The final newspaper of 1918 for Scottsbluff was the *Star-Herald*, published December 31, 1918. It included an enormous advertisement from the Japanese community thanking the Red Cross and the people of the valley for caring for so many of them during the epidemic. It was a moving yet simple tribute from the Japanese Association of Nebraska. It would also contain a short tale of flu in

³⁸ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 13, 1918.

³⁹ “City health board has removed quarantine ban” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 13, 1918.

⁴⁰ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 17, 1918; *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 20, 1918.

⁴¹ “Public gatherings are discouraged” *Gering Courier*, December 20, 1918.

⁴² “Quarantine of the sick now absolute” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 24, 1918; “Make quarantine rules” *Gering Courier*, December 27, 1918.

⁴³ “Schools will open Monday” *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 27, 1918.

Alliance.⁴⁴ The year would end with no mention of the dread disease anywhere in Scotts Bluff County.

⁴⁴ *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 31, 1918.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Examining the rural experience in Nebraska during the 1918 influenza pandemic provided a new level of insight into the differences and similarities between the urban and rural experience. As detailed in the study of Omaha during the 1918 pandemic, the community was devastated by disease. Despite public ordinances, streetcars ran at full capacity, parades were held to raise money for war bonds, even the annual Aksarben Coronation took place, and cases of flu were too numerous to count.¹ Based on results from Markel's studies, the findings in Omaha were consistent with most other cities, with some non-pharmaceutical interventions slowing the pace of disease, and public gatherings and parades spreading the disease more quickly.²

The rural experience in Nebraska deviated from the urban experience primarily in the virus's lack of regard for geographic isolation. Logic would dictate the farther people were from one another, the less likely they would be to get sick, but that was definitively not the case. Some of the most remote areas of Nebraska with the smallest populations had the worst episodes of disease. Cherry County, an area that geographically averaged less than two people per square mile, was one of the hardest hit areas, with a mortality rate of 2.5% of all cases. Scotts Bluff County was harder hit in the countryside than in the towns, with surges of cases sickening, and at times killing, entire families.

¹ Gary Gernhart, "A forgotten enemy: Omaha encounters the 1918 influenza pandemic" (MA thesis, University of Nebraska Omaha, 1998), 50-52; 66-67.

² H. Markel, A.M. Stern, J.A. Navarro, J.R. Michalsen, A.S. Montas, C. Giovanni, "Nonpharmaceutical influenza mitigation strategies, US communities, 1918-1920 pandemic," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12, no. 12 (2006): 1963; H. Markel, H.B. Lipman, J.A. Navarro, A. Sloan, J.R. Michalsen, A.M. Stern, M.S. Cetron, "Nonpharmaceutical interventions implemented by US cities during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic," *JAMA* 298, no. 6 (2007) 654.

Adherence to the ban on public gatherings appeared to help Wayne and Red Cloud, but nearby small communities were devastated by disease even when they stayed home. The ban on public gatherings had little effect on disease traveling through Scottsbluff, Gering, Valentine, or Anselmo. Without accurate morbidity and mortality rates it is impossible to provide a wholly accurate picture of the circumstances of rural Nebraska during the fall of 1918, but it is clear that rural location did not provide any protection from the virus. In fact, lack of access to basic services, like supportive health care, may have led to more deaths in counties lacking permanent infrastructure such as hospitals, as was the case in both Cherry and Scottsbluff counties.

The farther west the community, the greater the lack of infrastructure as detailed by this study. Makeshift hospitals had to be created in both Scottsbluff and Gering, sizeable towns for rural communities, and the shortage of both physicians and nurses made the circumstances even more overwhelming. The situation in Lincoln equaled Scottsbluff in they both hit multiple daily death records, but Lincoln had cemeteries, undertakers, and access to government funds, not to mention paved streets. Scottsbluff had little of those types of resources, least of all access to government money. So lawless capitalism reigned, even in the face of citizen complaints and health fears, store owners in Scottsbluff forced health officials to allow businesses to be open. Lack of infrastructure, including a weak law enforcement presence, made Scottsbluff vulnerable to disease in ways that Lincoln was not.

Anselmo and Valentine also suffered from lack of infrastructure, including hospitals, and access to adequate physicians and nurses. Unlike Red Cloud, there was no one working on roads, and poor areas that served Indians, like Gordon and the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, suffered many deaths. Not only did they not have hospitals, they did not have

access to healthcare personnel or even proper nutrition due to poverty. Many small communities suffered similar fates due to lack of access to infrastructure and resources.

The study clearly indicates an independence theme as discussed in the introductory chapters, exemplified by towns and counties making their own decisions, regardless that state government declared a ban on all public gatherings. Scottsbluff actually contacted the State health department, but was only willing to wait two days before making up their own minds and repealing their ban on public gatherings. This was consistent in every community studied. The communities in the eastern part of the state lifted the ban to hold elections, but there is no evidence that western communities did the same, or even held elections on November 5, 1918. They all did what was best for their immediate community and supported each tiny hamlet's decision as autonomous.

The rural newspaper was one of the most important media conduits available in 1918. Many areas of Nebraska lacked electricity and telephone service at that time, so the printed word was a critical tool of communication. Especially in towns like Valentine and Scottsbluff, known for their wild nature, the expression of sophisticated writing became key to expression of public thought. Impassioned articles were written poignantly by citizens, as communities were close knit, and deaths in such small communities were keenly felt. The death of one person could leave no one for 100 miles who could cut your hair with skill, a school district without a superintendent, or a group of telephone operators without a supervisor. The heroic act of a rancher would save six lives while his own was lost. A young nurse would be the first in Webster County to be selected by the Red Cross, and a young nurse in Valentine, "...wishing to be of service, and counting not her life dear unto herself,

she entered the fray only to become herself the victim of the dread disease.”³ Each story remains authentic and honest in a way that urban newspapers were not able to capture.

The lived experience of rural communities in October through December of 1918 was rich, humorous, and tragic. There is no pattern beyond disease and death; no geographic isolation could keep the virus away, nor would being in a crowd guarantee you would become ill. Portions of families died together and loss was all around. Public grief was palpable. Physicians and nurses were exhausted and over worked, at times breaking down at the tragedy they saw. Amidst all the horror there was some humor, as Santa got arrested for breaking the quarantine and well-meaning children raised the money to pay his fine.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* would provide the most poignant yet insightful statement in the battle against influenza:

“The year 1918 has gone: a year momentous as the termination of the most cruel war in the annals of the human race; a year which marked the end, at least for a time, of man’s destruction of man.; unfortunately a year in which developed a most fatal disease causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Medical science for four and one half years devoted itself to putting men on the firing line and keeping them there. Now it must turn with its whole might to combating the greatest enemy of all – infectious diseases. In this battle there must be no armistice; no peace without victory. Here’s wishing every member of *The Journal* family continuous courage in the glorious struggle, with victory succeeding victory, and to all a Happy and Prosperous New Year.”⁴

³ “Obituary Martha Bryant” *Valentine Democrat*, December 19, 1918.

⁴ *Journal of the American Medical Association* 71, no. 26 (1918) 2154.

As the studies of epidemics continue, scientists have learned many things, but how to control them still eludes us; especially outbreaks caused by viruses. Many questions remain, and scientists and physicians still have much to learn.⁵ Influenza is an elusive puzzle; the more research examined, the fewer answers emerge, only more questions.

The rural picture adds an even greater twist to an already complex story. If non-pharmaceutical interventions appeared to slow the virus in cities that adhered to them (not Omaha), why did such adherence appear to make no difference in morbidity and mortality in rural areas? People in Valentine were more diligent than those in Red Cloud, if in no other way than not lifting the ban on public gatherings on November 1, 1918, and yet many more people became sick in Valentine than did in Red Cloud; certainly many more died based simply on the numbers of obituaries published in each town. This appears counter-intuitive to what was learned studying cities. And if isolation and quarantine does not protect from the virus, what does? Handwashing? Vaccines? Both have proven effective in the past, and both have their limitations. The most over-arching conclusion based on the evidence from this study is that nothing can completely protect you from influenza, and some rural communities may have a false sense of security if they think influenza cannot reach them. This study shows that influenza can and will spread anywhere geographically, even to the most remote locations. Few things can stop pathogens in pursuit of infection.

⁵ MERS, Ebola, bird flu: Science's big missed opportunities (London, England: Reuters) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/26/us-health-epidemic-research-insight-idUSKCN0SK0P020151026> (accessed 10/26/2015).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 15, 1918.

The Goldenrod, October 14, 1918.

Commercial Advertiser, November 6, 1918.

Wayne Herald, October 10, 1918.

Nebraska Democrat, October 3, 1918.

Gering Courier, November 22, 1918.

Webster County Argus, December 19, 1918.

Republican, December 20, 1918.

Valentine Democrat, December 12, 1918.

Journal of the American Medical Association 71, no. 26: 2154.

The Enterprise, October 25, 1918.

Red Cloud Chief, December 12, 1918.

"10 Deaths but Few New Cases." *Valentine Democrat*, November 14, 1918.

"Adopt Measure to Stamp out Flu." *The Enterprise*, December 27, 1918.

"Advice to 'Flu' Convalescents." *Valentine Democrat*, December 5, 1918.

"Angel of Death Visits Many Scottsbluff Homes." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 22, 1918.

"Another Death at the State Prison." *Evening State Journal*, November 9, 1918.

"An Appeal for Help." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 1, 1918.

"At the College." *Nebraska Democrat*, 1918.

"Backbone Broken of Big Epidemic." *Evening State Journal*, October 14, 1918.

"Ban Not Lifted by Healthboard." *Evening State Journal*, November 1, 1918.

- "Ban to Raise Friday Night." *Valentine Democrat*, November 28, 1918.
- Cather, Willa. "One of Ours." New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1922.
- Cather, Willa S. "Roll Call on the Prairies." *The Red Cross Magazine* 14 (July 1919): 27-31.
- "Citizens Ask for Rigid Quarantine." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 5, 1918.
- "City Death Record Made in October." *Evening State Journal*, November 16, 1918.
- "City Health Board Facing Puzzle." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 10, 1918.
- "City Takes Precautions against 'Spanish Flu'." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 11, 1918.
- "Death Continues Its Grim Harvest." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 15, 1918.
- "Death of Carl Sweigart." *Wayne Herald*, December 19, 1918.
- "Death of Mrs. John Bowley." *The Enterprise*, December 6, 1918.
- "Death Record for Past Four Days." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 5, 1918.
- "Dr. Stockman Returns." *Webster County Argus*, December 5, 1918.
- Dunn, D. "Observations on an Epidemic of Bronchopneumonia in Omaha." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 71, no. 26 (1918): 2128-30.
- "Epidemic Figures Rather Hopeful." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 26, 1918.
- "Epidemic Still Declining." *Evening State Journal*, November 19, 1918.
- "Epidemic under Control." *Evening State Journal*, October 18, 1918.
- "Flu Is Gone." *Republican*, December 20, 1918.
- "Flu Lid Is Lifted." *Gering Courier*, December 13, 1918.
- "The Flu Situation." *The Enterprise*, December 13, 1918.
- "'Flu' Situation Is Greatly Improved." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 6, 1918.
- "French Advice on the Prevention of Influenza Mortality." *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3018 (11/2/1918): 496.
- "George H. Hernby Dies from Blood Poisoning." *Valentine Democrat*, November 21, 1918.

- "Getting Upper Hand on the Flu." *Republican*, November 8, 1918.
- "Government Paying Physicians." *Evening State Journal*, November 9, 1918.
- "Grim Reaper Is Harvesting Many." *Gering Courier*, December 6, 1918.
- "The Grim Reaper Still on the Job." *Commercial Advertiser*, 1918.
- "Harry Berry Dies in Wyoming." *The Enterprise*, December 6, 1918.
- "Health Notice Regarding the Influenza." *Nebraska Democrat*, October 10, 1918.
- "Hospital Is Closed." *Republican*, December 20, 1918.
- "Humiliation of Church Pastors." *Wayne Herald*, November 14, 1918.
- "Indians Honor Son Who Died in Service." *Republican*, November 15, 1918.
- "The Influenza." *Nebraska Democrat*, November 7, 1918.
- "Influenza Again Stops Draft Selects." *Republican*, October 25, 1918.
- "Influenza at Work." *Republican*, October 11, 1918.
- "Influenza Ban Is Now Lifted." *Republican*, November 29, 1918.
- "Influenza Epidemic Very Serious – Two Deaths Here." *Valentine Democrat*, October 24, 1918.
- "Influenza Is Decreasing." *Evening State Journal*, October 23, 1918.
- "Influenza Mercury Takes Sudden Rise." *Evening State Journal*, October 22, 1918.
- "The Influenza Situation." *The Enterprise*, November 15, 1918.
- "Little Change in Past Three Days." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 29, 1918.
- "Local Physician urges Closing Public Meetings." *Webster County Argus*, October 17, 1918.
- Lynch, C., and J.G. Cumming. "The Distribution of Influenza by Direct Contact--Hands and Eating Utensils." *American Journal of Public Health* 9, no. 1 (1919): 25.
- "Make Quarantine Rules." *Gering Courier*, December 27, 1918.
- "More Rigid Health Orders Are Issued." *Gering Courier*, November 29, 1918.

Mueller, Keith. 2008.

Nebraska, State of. "Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Warden of the State Penitentiary." Lincoln, Nebraska, 1918.

———. "Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of the Nebraska Hospital for the Insane." Lincoln, Nebraska, 1918.

"New Rules and Regulations." *Red Cloud Chief*, October 10, 1918.

"New Rules and Regulations." *Webster County Argus*, October 10, 1918.

"No State Wide Ban." *Wayne Herald*, November 21, 1918.

"Notice." *Valentine Democrat*, December 19, 1918.

"Obituary Martha Bryant." *Valentine Democrat*, December 19, 1918.

"Public Gatherings Are Discouraged." *Gering Courier*, December 20, 1918.

"Public Meetings Banned." *Republican*, October 18, 1918.

"Quarantine for Influenza Cases." *Wayne Herald*, December 26, 1918.

"Quarantine Not to Be Lifted as Yet." *Gering Courier*, November 15, 1918.

"Quarantine of the Sick Now Absolute." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 24, 1918.

"Quarantine Sick Says U.S. Surgeon." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 26, 1918.

"Red Cross Presents Hospital Plan." *Republican*, November 29, 1918.

"Safeguarding the Home." *Republican*, December 6, 1918.

"Santa Claus Forgot Quarantine Rules." *Gering Courier*, December 6, 1918.

"Schools Will Open Monday." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 27, 1918.

"The Senate to Take Action." *Evening State Journal*, November 27, 1918.

"Social Notes." *Nebraska Democrat*, October 10, 1918.

"Spanish 'Flu' in the Country." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 15, 1918.

"The Spanish Flu." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, October 4, 1918.

- "Spanish Influenza." *Republican*, October 18, 1918.
- "The Spanish Influenza." *Nebraska Democrat*, October 10, 1918.
- "Spanish Influenza." *Valentine Democrat*, October 17, 1918.
- Staley, Kenneth. "Biodefense Policy: Whitehouse Homeland Security Counsel - Grand Rounds Presentation." University of Nebraska Medical Center, 2008.
- "Startling Figures Shown by Epidemic in This City." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, November 1, 1918.
- "State Department of Health." *Nebraska Democrat*, December 26, 1918.
- "State Health Board for Rigid Quarantine." *Wayne Herald*, December 19, 1918.
- "Strict Quarantine May Be Necessary." *Evening State Journal*, November 25, 1918.
- "Team Work." *The Goldenrod*, November 4, 1918.
- "Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 V-3." 17-44: United States Federal Government, 1910.
- "Three Japanese Buried Yesterday." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 3, 1918.
- "To Combat Flu." *The Enterprise*, October 19, 1918.
- "Twelve Cases of 'Flu' in Valentine." *Valentine Democrat*, October 17, 1918.
- "Two Die in One Randolph House Monday." *Nebraska Democrat*, October 24, 1918.
- Waite, H. H. . "Influenza." *The Nebraska State Medical Journal* 4, no. 3 (1918): 76-80.
- "Wakefield Citizen Dies." *Wayne Herald*, November 28, 1918.
- Webster, Robert G. "Is Influenza Singing Us Lullabies?" Paper presented at the Nebraska Infection Control Network/Association for Professionals in Infection Control Annual Conference, Omaha, NE, August 10, 2010.
- "Weekly Reports for January 17, 1919." *Public Health Reports* 34, no. 3 (1919): 69-101.
- "What Is a Public Gathering." *Evening State Journal*, October 22, 1918.
- Wherry, WH. "Regular Meeting Omaha-Douglas County Medical Society." *The Nebraska State Medical Journal* IV, no. 2 (1919): 33-48.
- "A Wild, Wild Woman." *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, December 6, 1918.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- "Armistice - the End of World War I, 1918."
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/armistice.htm>.
- "About the Wayne Herald/Morning Shopper."
http://www.mywaynenews.com/our_newspaper/about_us/.
- "About Webster County Argus." A.J. Kenney,
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95061674/>.
- Andersen, Mark "Flu History: Spanish Flu Claimed Record Lives." *Lincoln Journal Star*, May 2, 2009.
- Barry, J.M. *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*. Penguin Group USA, 2005.
- Bennett, Mildred R. *The World of Willa Cather*. Vol. 112: U of Nebraska Press, 1961.
- "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: Norris, George William, (1861 - 1944)." <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=N000139>.
- Boye, Alan. *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State*. U of Nebraska Press, 1939.
- Bristow, Nancy K. *American Pandemic: Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . "'It's as Bad as Anything Can Be': Patients, Identity, and the Influenza Pandemic." *Public Health Reports* 125, no. Suppl 3 (2010): 134.
- Bureau, US Census. "Quick Facts - Nebraska."
<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/POP060210/31,00>.
- "Cherry County." Cherry County.
- Chowell, G., L. Bettencourt, N. Johnson, W.J. Alonso, and C. Viboud. "The 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic in England and Wales: Spatial Patterns in Transmissibility and Mortality Impact." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 275, no. 1634 (2008): 501.
- Control, Centers for Disease, and Prevention. "Estimates of Deaths Associated with Seasonal Influenza---United States, 1976-2007." *MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report* 59, no. 33 (2010): 1057.
- County, Custer. "Custer County History."
<http://www.co.custer.ne.us/webpages/about/history.html>.

- "County History." Webster County,
<http://www.co.webster.ne.us/webpages/about/history.html>.
- Crosby, A.W. *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. Cambridge Univ Pr, 2003.
- . *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*. Greenwood Pub Group, 1976.
- Flu.gov. "Seasonal Flu." http://www.flu.gov/about_the_flu/seasonal/index.html.
- Foundation, The Willa Cather. "Timeline." <https://www.willacather.org/about/willacather/timeline>.
- Funk, Clayton. "Popular Culture, Art Education, and the Committee on Public Information During World War I, 1915-1919." *Visual Arts Research* 37, no. 1 (2011): 67-78.
- Gailey, Becky. "Understanding Nebraska: Pride, Geography and Self-Deprication." *Strategic Dicussions for Nebraska* 2: 26-27.
- Galandiuk, Susan, Suhail S Mahid, Hiram C Polk, Matthias Turina, Mohan Rao, and John N Lewis. "Differences and Similarities between Rural and Urban Operations." *Surgery* 140, no. 4 (2006): 589-96.
- Gernhart, Gary. "A Forgotten Enemy: PHS's Fight against the 1918 Influenza Pandemic." *Public health reports* 114, no. 6 (1999): 559.
- Gernhart, Gary Lynn. "A Forgotten Enemy: Omaha Encounters the 1918 Influenza Pandemic." University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1998.
- Hartzler, Jonas Smucker. *Mennonites in the World War: Or, Nonresistance under Test*. Mennonite Publishing House, 1921.
- Hatchett, Richard J, Carter E Mecher, and Marc Lipsitch. "Public Health Interventions and Epidemic Intensity During the 1918 Influenza Pandemic." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104, no. 18 (2007): 7582-87.
- Hoehling, Adolph A. *The Great Epidemic*. Little, Brown and Company, 1961.
- "Influenza." Dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/influenza?s=t>.
- Johnson, Niall PAS, and Juergen Mueller. "Updating the Accounts: Global Mortality of the 1918-1920" Spanish" Influenza Pandemic." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 76, no. 1 (2002): 105-15.

- Kelland, Kate. "Mers, Ebola, Bird Flu: Science's Big Missed Opportunities." Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/26/us-health-epidemic-research-insight-idUSKCN0SK0P020151026>.
- Kirakli, Cenk, Dursun Tatar, Pinar Cimen, Ozlem Edipoglu, Meral Coskun, Emel Celikten, and Ayse Ozsoz. "Survival from Severe Pandemic H1n1 in Urban and Rural Turkey: A Case Series." *Respiratory care* 56, no. 6 (2011): 790-95.
- Kolata, G.B. *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It*. Touchstone, 2001.
- Larson, Cedric, and James R Mock. "The Lost Files of the Creel Committee of 1917-19." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1939): 5-29.
- Markel, H., H.B. Lipman, J.A. Navarro, A. Sloan, J.R. Michalsen, A.M. Stern, and M.S. Cetron. "Nonpharmaceutical Interventions Implemented by Us Cities During the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic." *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association* 298, no. 6 (2007): 644.
- Markel, H., A.M. Stern, J.A. Navarro, J.R. Michalsen, A.S. Monto, and C. DiGiovanni. "Nonpharmaceutical Influenza Mitigation Strategies, Us Communities, 1918-1920 Pandemic." *Emerg Infect Dis* 12, no. 12 (2006): 1961-64.
- McDonald, Joyce. "Willa Cather North by Northwest." Cather Project, <http://cather.unl.edu/community.tours.jaffrey.html>.
- McKee, Jim. "Spanish Influenza Epidemic Hits State." *Lincoln Journal Star*, Dec. 16, 2007.
- McSweeney, K., A. Colman, N. Fancourt, M. Parnell, S. Stantiall, G. Rice, M. Baker, and N. Wilson. "Was Rurality Protective in the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in New Zealand?" *Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association* 120, no. 1256 (2007).
- Meit, M. "Public Health in Rural America." *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 13, no. 3 (2007): 235.
- Meit, M., and A. Knudson. "Why Is Rural Public Health Important? A Look to the Future." *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 15, no. 3 (2009): 185.
- "Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Ragan to Ruskin ". Nebraska State Historical Society, http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/R-Inventory-1.pdf.
- "Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Valentine to Virginia." Nebraska State Historical Society, http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/V-Inventory-1.pdf.

- "Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm: Valentine to Virginia ". Nebraska State Historical Societ, http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/V-Inventory-1.pdf.
- "Nebraska US Senate." <http://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=267939>.
- Nishiura, H., and G. Chowell. "Rurality and Pandemic Influenza: Geographic Heterogeneity in the Risks of Infection and Death in Kanagawa, Japan (1918–1919)." *Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association* 121, no. 1284 (2008).
- Olson, J.C., and R.C. Naugle. "History of Nebraska." (1997).
- Organization, World Health. "Cumulative Number of Confirmed Human Cases of Avian Influenza a/(H5n1) Reported to Who (2015)." http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/EN_GIP_20150106CumulativeNumberH5N1cases_corrected.pdf?ua=1.
- Patterson, K.D., and G.F. Pyle. "The Geography and Mortality of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65, no. 1 (1991): 4.
- Pettit, D.A. "A Cruel Wind: America Experiences Pandemic Influenza, 1918-1920: A Social History." University of New Hampshire, 1976.
- Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and. "Community Non Pharmaceutical Interventions." <http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/community/index.html>.
- Schierbeek, Abraham. "Antoni Van Leeuwenhoek." *JAMA* 181, no. 3 (1962): 274-74.
- Seigel, JD, E Rhinehart, M Jackson, and L Chiarello. "Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings 2007." <http://www.cdc.gov> (2007).
- Services, United States Dept of Health and Human. "The Great Pandemic the United States in 1918-1919." http://www.flu.gov/pandemic/history/1918/your_state/midwest/nebraska/index.html.
- Shors, T., and S.H. McFadden. "1918 Influenza: A Winnebago County, Wisconsin Perspective." *Clinical Medicine & Research* 7, no. 4 (2009): 147.
- Slattery, Christina; Moffett, Chad. *Wayne County Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*. Madison, Wisconsin: Mead & Hunt, 2000.
- Society, Nebraska State Historical. "Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm, Adams to Ayr." http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/A-Inventory-1.pdf.

Society, Nebraska State Historical. "Nebraska Newspapers on Microfilm: Wabash to Wyoming " http://nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/library/newspapers_pdfs/W-Inventory-1.pdf.

"Subscribe to the Red Cloud Chief." Main Street Media, <http://www.iclassifiedsnetwork.com/43334/1689/subscribe-to-red-cloud-chief>.

Sullivan, Peter M. "Willa Cather's German Connections." *Cather Studies* 4 (1999).

Taubenberger, J.K., and D.M. Morens. "1918 Influenza: The Mother of All Pandemics." *Rev Biomed* 17 (2006): 69-79.

Taubenberger, Jeffery K, Ann H Reid, Amy E Krafft, Karen E Bijwaard, and Thomas G Fanning. "Initial Genetic Characterization of the 1918 "Spanish" Influenza Virus." *Science* 275, no. 5307 (1997): 1793-96.

Trout, Steven. "Willa Cather's One of Ours and the Iconography of Remembrance." *Cather Studies* 4 (1999): 187-204.

"Us Inflation Calculator." Coin News Media Group, <http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>.

"Valentine Democrat." University of Nebraska Lincoln, <http://nebnewspapers.unl.edu/newspaper/paper/sn95069780/60/1020>.

"Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Anselmo: Custer County." University of Nebraska Lincoln, <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/custer/anselmo/index.php>.

"Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Red Cloud: Webster County ". University of Nebraska Lincoln, <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/webster/redcloud/>.

"Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Valentine: Cherry County." University of Nebraska Lincoln, <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/cherry/valentine/>.

"Virtual Nebraska Our Towns: Wayne: Wayne County." University of Nebraska Lincoln, <http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/wayne/wayne/>.

Webster, Robert G. "1918 Spanish Influenza: The Secrets Remain Elusive." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 96, no. 4 (1999): 1164-66.

Wolfe, N.D., C.P. Dunavan, and J. Diamond. "Origins of Major Human Infectious Diseases." *Nature* 447, no. 7142 (2007): 279-83.

Zimmer, Carl. *A Planet of Viruses*. University of Chicago Press, 2012

FIGURE BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER ONE:

Figure 1: Diagram of an influenza virus “Influenza virus Image ID # 17346,”
<http://phil.cdc.gov/phil/imageidsearch.asp>.

Figure 2: Community populations in Nebraska: 1910 U.S. Census: Population graph, created by author.

Figure 3: Map of study communities: created by author using base map
<http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/NE/state.htm>.

CHAPTER TWO:

Figure 4: Geographic location of Fort Riley and Camp Funston, Kansas
http://pix.epodunk.com/locatorMaps/ks/KS_4636.gif.

Figure 5: Timeline of Events, created by author.

CHAPTER THREE:

Figure 6: Main Street, Wayne, Nebraska, 1907
<http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/wayne/wayne/image.php?image=3>.

Figure 7: Map of Wayne County <http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/NE/County/wayne.htm>.

Figure 8: Uncle Sam’s advice on flu, *Nebraska Democrat*, October 31, 1918.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Figure 9: Main intersection, Red Cloud, Nebraska, 1909
<http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/webster/redcloud/image.php?image=3>.

Figure 10: Map of Webster County,
<http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/NE/County/webster.htm>.

Figure 11: Red Cross nurse, *Commercial Advertiser*, October 18, 1918.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Figure 12: Main Street, Anselmo, Nebraska, 1905
<http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/custer/anselmo/image.php?image=5>.

Figure 13: Map of Custer County
<http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/NE/County/custer.htm>.

Figure 14: Declaration from *The Enterprise*, *The Enterprise*, October 4, 1918.

CHAPTER SIX:

Figure 15: Map of Cherry County
<http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/NE/County/cherry.htm>.

Figure 16: Main Street, Valentine, Nebraska, 1911
<http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/cherry/valentine/image.php?image=4>.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Figure 17: Map of Scotts Bluff County

<http://www.livgenmi.com/1895/NE/County/scottsbluff.htm>.

Figure 18: Broadway Street, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 1900

<http://www.casde.unl.edu/history/counties/scottsbluff/scottsbluff-gering/image.php?image=4>.

Figure 19: Old Main Street, Gering, Nebraska, no date

http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/scotts_bluff/photos/Essays/gering_main_street_banner.jpg.