The 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Bloomington
By Emily Noffke

Note: This article first appeared in the Monroe County Historian, Aug./Sept. 2015, when the author was the MCHC Research Library Manager, and is reprinted with her permission.

The influenza epidemic of 1918, or “America’s Forgotten Pandemic” as historian Alfred W. Crosby labels it, has often been over-shadowed by World War I in historic memory. Beginning in the autumn of 1918 and tapering off in the spring of 1919, this dangerous influenza strain killed more people worldwide than WWI. At a mortality rate of 2.5 percent, 28 percent of all Americans were infected. According to Stanford University, this epidemic “was so severe that the average life span in the U.S. was depressed by 10 years.” The first noted appearance of the “Spanish Influenza” in Indiana was 20 September 1918. According to Donna Ray, during the worst month of the epidemic, October 1918, fifteen Monroe County citizens lost their lives to the flu and associated complications like pneumonia. Overall, approximately 350,000 Hoosiers were infected by the “flu” and 10,000 perished during this pandemic.

For many Monroe County residents, the influenza epidemic of 1918 was a monumental event. According to the Bloomington Daily Telephone, the “discussion of influenza is a personal matter because everybody has had, or is afraid they will have, it.” This was the case for Virginia Dixon, who recalled her battle with the flu in a 1979 interview: “My dad was the only one who didn’t have it—the flu. And he’d just go from bed to bed and give us our medicine. And I can recall I was in bed with one of my older sisters and the doctor, my uncle, came to see me, and says ‘Well now, Virginia, I think you’re able to get up now.’ And I was limp! Just as limp! And I didn’t feel like getting up … that was interesting because flu was just the most debilitating thing you could have. You couldn’t get over it. They didn’t have antibiotics and things like that, then.” Virginia, along with her mother and seven siblings, was infected with the flu in Noblesville, Indiana.

Victor Dixon remembers the impact of the flu on his regiment stationed in Houston, Texas, recalling, “the fresh recruits came in from Illinois and they weren’t strong enough to withstand the flu and they just died like flies … they tried to take care of them in camp and every day you’d see the wagons going by holding these boxes.” Only one or two soldiers in Victor’s regiment died from influenza. According to Victor, his “group was very conditioned physically and warded off the disease.”
While the flu had an evident impact on those who were infected, the fear surrounding the flu proved to be a weighty burden on all Monroe County citizens’ lives. Between 9 October 1918 and 2 November 1919, the State Board of Health placed a flu ban on Monroe County “closing all schools, churches, theatres and lodges.”10 During this period, articles in the Daily Student regularly referenced the university “Flu Ban,” which established additional guidelines for Indiana University students during the worst months of the pandemic. Put in place by the Committee on Student Health, this ban “caused much grumbling and some inconvenience.”11 According to the Daily Student a “new influenza proclamation” given during a university production of a popular play “nearly cause[d] a riot.”12 Even in 1920, after the worst of the epidemic had passed, there were still strict regulations limiting the movement of the student body. For example, out-of-town guests were unwelcome at IU functions and it was strongly recommended that “no student leave Bloomington on weekend visits.”13

Evidence that flu regulations at IU were taken seriously includes a report that a professor, Dr. Senour from the English department, “was automatically struck from the payrolls” when he was “caught by Dean Wells, one evening...while the ‘flu’ ban was on, walking down the street with a date.”14 It is quite possible that he was forgiven considering he appeared in the 1919 and 1920 Arbutus issues as a member of the English department faculty.

Just as many IU buildings were adapted for military use during this period, the influenza epidemic necessitated the transformation of various campus spaces in order to house the sick. For example, portions of the Student Building, including the Vesper room and women’s gymnasium, were utilized as a hospital. Assembly Hall was also employed as a place to treat soldiers-in-training who had become infected with influenza.15

Towards the end of the epidemic, many grew tired of the anxiety and hype surrounding influenza. In a satirical column for the Daily Student, Ecne R. Wail claims “it is getting quite popular and stylish to have the ‘flu,’ just as it was to have false angina in the fall and the mumps several years ago.”16 Wail continues, “it is a sort of national fraternity…when people get in touch with ‘flu’ they are very likely to remark, and in the presence of listeners, ‘Well, I have the grippe.’ And some of them seem rather proud.”17 While this author finds humor in the situation, he also makes clear that the flu is no joke: “There is nothing funny about the ‘flu’ after one gets it and once is about often enough to have it.”18

The end of the epidemic in Bloomington was announced in an article published by the Bloomington Daily Telephone on 10 February 1920. According to the City Health Officer, Dr. Luzadder, “no new cases were reported … no deaths have taken place and the situation is such that there is no intention of closing the schools.”19 The Bloomington Telephone neatly summarized the impact of the influenza pandemic by insisting that “the public should understand that 1918 will be known in history not only as the close of the war, but as the year in which one of the greatest, if not the greatest scourges known in the world’s history occurred.”20

Notes

4. “The Influenza Pandemic of 1918.”
5. Bloomington Daily Telephone, December 30, 1918.
8. Victor’s company, from Paoli, Indiana, served as the hospital company of the regiment.
High Winds Topple Worley Monument in Presbyterian Cemetery, 1893

By Penelope Mathiesen

One night in late March of 1893, a series of ferocious windstorms swept northward “from the gulf states to the Canadian border and embracing a path four or five hundred miles wide,” doing “an incalculable amount of damage as well as causing considerable loss of life in various places.” Ellettsville’s newspaper, the Monroe County Citizen, published an article on 1 April 1893 stating that the devastation “was very severe in this section and was perhaps the worst wind storm we have had since the great cyclone that passed through Owen county in 1883.”

The storms passed through Whitehall, five miles south of Ellettsville, doing “considerable damage.” Two miles north, George Rumple’s house was blown from its foundation, “but none of the family were seriously injured. The barn was also partially unroofed. One mile further on in its course toward Ellettsville about thirty acres of timber on the farm of Jake Starnes was almost literally swept to the earth.”

The town of Ellettsville was largely unscathed. “The streak of hard wind just grazed Ellettsville on the northwest, shaking the houses and … some of the outbuildings.” The most spectacular effect of the storm was to be seen in the Presbyterian Cemetery, just northwest of town, where “the large fifty foot monument of the Matthews family was prostrated as was also the large Worley monument.”

Both monuments were restored to erect positions and are still standing in the Presbyterian Cemetery today. The Matthews monument honors deceased members of the family associated with Matthews Brothers Stone Company in Ellettsville.

At the time of the windstorm in 1893, the Worley monument marked the final resting place of the parents of Francis E. Worley, owner of the Worley Bank in Ellettsville. The inscription on the south face of the monument reads: “Margaret, Wife of H. Worley, Born Feb. 10, 1805, Died May 24 1871.” The inscription on the east face of the monument reads: “Hiram Worley, Died Jan. 5 1872, Aged 64 Yr’s 3 Mo. 5 D’s.”

The Worley Bank failed in late May of 1893. Francis Worley and his wife, Laura, moved to St. Louis, but they maintained ties with Ellettsville for many years. After Francis’s death in 1919, his body was sent by train from St. Louis to Ellettsville for burial in the Presbyterian Cemetery. A simple inscription was added to the north face of the monument, showing the years of his birth and death separated by a Masonic symbol.

Today, the tall obelisk stands inside an iron fenced enclosure that also contains three small headstones for F. E. Worley, H. Worley, and M. Worley. Although Laura Worley’s name is inscribed on the west face of the monument, there are no dates. Her final resting place is in her native state of Tennessee, in McMinnville’s Riverside Cemetery.

Notes

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
5. Interview with longtime Ellettsville resident Frances Harding Endwright, [2002]. According to her, Laura did not accompany the body.
CURRENT EXHIBITS

Online Exhibit Spotlight: *Monroe County ’s Firsts: Breaking the Color Barrier* celebrates the triumphs of Monroe County’s African American citizens and the vast accomplishments achieved throughout the county’s two hundred years. You can visit the digital version of this exhibition through the “online exhibits” tab on our website: monroehistory.org. This exhibit was made possible with funding from the Operation Round Up program of SCI REMC and the Wylie Foundation. We are always updating this digital exhibit as we gather more information and photographs. If you have details to add or someone you would like to recommend for the exhibit, please let us know.

BROWN GALLERY: Transportation in Monroe County

For the past 200 years, the import and export of raw materials, finished goods, and even people has been a challenge for those living in Monroe County. Exhibits in the Brown Gallery tell the story of how Monroe County continued to grow despite obstacles presented by hilly terrain and a region without a major water source. The ongoing theme of the exhibits in the Brown Gallery will be transportation in Monroe County with changing artifacts throughout the year.

HILL GALLERY: Stitched with Love: Family Quilts

Quilts have the ability to symbolize a family’s love for each other through their patterns, materials, and purpose. The variety of colors from a beloved husband and father’s ties, the flower designs stitched together with pieces of cotton fabrics or the family photos included in the designs, each quilt on display tells an intimate part of its family’s history. **Open February 28th – July 27th, 2020.**

RECHTER GALLERY: Hoosier-in-Residence: T. C. Steele’s Franklin Hall Studio

Born and raised a Hoosier, T. C. Steele brought the beauty of the Indiana landscape to a developing modern world. For the last four years of his life T. C. and Selma Steele made Bloomington their home from fall to spring, spending the other half at the House of Singing Winds in nearby Brown County. While serving as IU’s first artist-in-residence, he was given a studio at the top of Franklin Hall. This summer the History Center will rebuild that studio to show the impact T. C. and Selma had on Indiana University and Bloomington. **Open July 10th – November 13th, 2020.**

DECKARD EDUCATION ROOM:

VOTES FOR WOMEN: The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Monroe County

Highlighting the remarkable women of Monroe County who fought for more than 50 years for the right to vote, this exhibit introduces visitors to the political activities of the Equal Suffrage Club and the Bloomington Franchise League in the context of the State and National suffrage movement. The exhibit is free and open to the public in the Deckard Education Room and will be on display until December 30th, 2020.

COMMUNITY VOICES: Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard

Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard is a community food resource center, working to improve access to healthy food in ways that cultivate dignity, self-sufficiency, and community. Prior to COVID-19, MHC materials and information were on display at the History Center. MHC states: “While we’re sad to have missed you all due to COVID complications and closures, you can still find many of our resources online! For pantry and education program updates, you can visit us at Facebook.com/ MHCHub or mhcfoodpantry.org. To catch up with folks from MHC’s Advocacy Team, join our Virtual Coffee Talks (Log-In information available on our Facebook). And to view a broad set of cooking and gardening resources from the Hub’s 20 years of serving Monroe County, visit our blog at GardenTableCommunity.blogspot.com.”

As the history keepers and storytellers for our county, it is our responsibility to collect and preserve artifacts, and to tell the stories of all residents of Monroe County. Black history is OUR history. Through preserving our past we seek to ensure a more just future—free of racism and social injustice. Black history matters and Black lives matter.
FROM THE DIRECTOR

My, what an interesting time these last few months have been for us all! I’m so thankful for all of the support the History Center has had from our community, our members, and our volunteers while the museum has been closed. Thank you to each of you who renewed your membership, made a donation, purchased a puzzle or participated in a virtual meeting with us. Thank you for the phone calls and notes to see how we’re doing, what we’re doing and for chatting with us so we could all stay connected. You’ve had an impact on all of us. Thank you also to the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County for their Rapid Response grants for so many of our local non-profits, including the History Center, to the team at Old National Bank for helping us with our Paycheck Protection Program funding, and for grant opportunities from the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association, Bloomington Arts Council, Indiana Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. We feel blessed to have so much support.

I hope you’ve had a chance to enjoy some of our virtual activities, videos, and stories over the last few months. Every member of our staff and many of our volunteers continued working while the museum was closed and I’m proud of them for staying positive and revamping their usual methods of sharing information to find ways to continue to make our community stories available for you to enjoy. As I’m writing this, we are making plans to once again reopen the museum and library. We’re discussing what that means in this changed world, how that will look and what new policies we’ll have to put in place to make that happen. The Coronavirus has and will continue to have a huge impact on all of our lives going forward. We’re looking at our events, programs, exhibits and fundraisers. Some are being rescheduled, some have format changes, some unfortunately had to be cancelled. We’re optimistic though, and we hope you’ll visit us in person again starting in late June. Rest assured that we plan to do everything we can to make sure you’re comfortable and safe when you visit the museum or the library. We miss you and can’t wait to see you!

I know many of you are curious about what's going on with our annual Garage Sale fundraiser. So are we at this point. The Sale has been postponed from our normal June date. We will be working with Cook Medical to set a new date, hopefully in early fall, keeping in mind safety for our shoppers and volunteers. The Garage Sale team is once again working in the warehouse but donations from the public are still on hold. Keep an eye on your emails, our website and our Facebook page for more updates as they develop.

Susan Dyar, Director

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Ron Walker, Sr. has been volunteering at the Welcome Desk since November 2017 and is known for being a friendly face and always having a great story to share. Always willing to lend a helping hand, Ron has creatively offered solutions on many occasions. Most notably, when moving a new accession to third floor storage, Ron swooped in to save the day! While trying to wheel the display for “Bugtown” (a former display from Tovy’s Shoe Store) onto the elevator, Ron’s creative solution made for a simple and easy transition. What a stroke of genius!

Volunteer Appreciation Month occurs in April of every year. Because of the stay-at-home orders, we couldn’t celebrate our volunteers in person as usual. But we would like to say how much we truly appreciate all of the time and talent everyone brings to the History Center. Our 40 year history would not be the same with you!

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM STORE

Looking for ways to be entertained at home? Check out our puzzles. The following puzzles are available in our online store. Visit us at www.monroehistory.org.

Both Puzzles have 672 pieces

The puzzle on the left is our 2017 Puzzlefest “Monroe County Memories” puzzle – on sale for $15.00.

The Puzzle on the right is our 2020 Puzzlefest “IU Bicentennial” puzzle – on sale for $20.00.

Free delivery available for Monroe County Residents!
Stella Jane Franklin, retired from Indiana Bell Telephone Company after 21 years of service. She was a life member of the Telephone Pioneers, and a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution Bloomington Chapter, Indiana Society of Mayflower Descendants, American Legion Auxiliary, and Eastern Star Montezuma Chapter. Stella was a member of St. Paul United Methodist Church.

Helen Freeman, retired from the Bloomington Post Office after 42 years of service. She delivered for Meals on Wheels for over 25 years. Mark Kruzan, mayor of Bloomington, declared February 14, 2008 Helen Freeman Day because of her immeasurable contributions to her community.

Bernie Fry, worked many years at Smithville Telephone as an Information Technology Manager and at IU in several departments as a Lead Developer, Systems Administrator and Media Developer before retiring in 2018. Bernie was a gentle, giving, and humorous man. He loved cycling and camping with his family. He was an avid recycler and gardener. Bernie doted on many pet cats over the years. Their love for him was mutual. He enjoyed creating pottery for his loved ones who continue to cherish his art. Bernie’s most beloved hobby was writing. It was how he best expressed himself. He catalogued his medical journey through a blog to update his family and friends, and spent his last years writing a book about his life and stories for his grandchildren.

Marion Jacobs, retired from MCCSC as a teacher helping to mold many youths through his teaching career. Once retired he served the community on many boards such as the RBBCSC School Board and President of the Richland Senior Citizen Housing Board. He earned the high honor of the Maurice Endwright Award from the Ellettsville Chamber of Commerce for Community Service in 2019. He worshiped at the Bethel Baptist Church and was a member of the Ellettsville Masonic Lodge #45.

Joan Olcott, served on a number of boards including Ivy Tech where she earned an honorary degree and the Bloomington Hospital Foundation. She also served as her daughters’ Girl Scout Leader, was a life-long active member of groups including: Kappa Alpha Theta Alums, P.E.O., Psi Ota Xi and their Thrift Store, and Conversation Club. A two-time breast cancer survivor, Joan gifted seed money for the Olcott Center, originally at Bloomington Hospital, specializing in treating and caring for women with cancer. For many years Joan helped kickoff the Hoosiers Outrun Cancer event by thanking participants from the stage. Joan also gifted major support to the Olcott Library at Ivy Tech and the Olcott Lounge at IU’s Cook Hall. She and her late husband Lloyd were inducted into the Monroe County Hall of Fame as Humanitarians for their generosity and love of all people in Bloomington.

Betina Rudman, worked at IU with John and Bertie Preer for her entire career as a research biologist studying the genetics of Paramecium. She retired at age 83 after almost 60 years of research. Bert had many passions besides biology. She sang with the Bloomington Chamber Singers and was a member of the Bloomington League of Women Voters, serving as president for many years. She was very involved in starting the recycling program in Indiana and was passionate about environmental issues. She traveled to all corners of the world, often with her son Phil. But most of all she loved IU Basketball, and rarely missed a game for over 50 years.
NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY
Compiled by Megan MacDonald and Penelope Mathiesen

New Divorce Index

An expanded and updated Divorce Index has been added to the Research Library’s website. Monroe County Indiana Divorce Index, 1818–1960 combines information from two sources: Civil Books held in the Monroe County Clerk’s Office, and civil court records held in the Monroe County History Center’s Research Library.

The Civil Books were previously indexed by Marilyn McCoy (coordinated and assembled by Claude F. and Rachel Rice) and published as Monroe County Indiana Divorce Index 1818–1960 in 2002. The new 2020 edition, indexed by Lee Ehman, incorporates additional information from the Civil Books entries, including the maiden or former surname. Court record entries have been integrated into the Civil Books entries. If there is a court record available, this contains the actual complaint, usually specifying the grounds for the divorce, whether there are children, occupations, address, support asked, and other details. Physical copies of court records are available in the Research Library.

The index is alphabetized by plaintiff (wife or husband) but is also searchable by surname. This resource may be accessed at: www.monroehistory.org by selecting “Library,” “Indexes and Resources,” and “Divorce Index.”

Collections Corner
By Hilary Fleck

As you might expect, things have changed a bit in the Collections Department in response to the Governor's stay-at-home order. All collections volunteers and interns have been restricted from the building and as Collection Manager, I am working on what projects I can from home. The majority of my work from home is processing our recently donated Bloomington Fire Department collection, which contains hundreds of photographs of the department's 100 year history. In our last newsletter, I highlighted a photograph of a fire that happened just across the street from the then Public Library in 1939. Another photo from the collection is this image of the Victor Oolitic Limestone Mill on fire on April 12, 1961.

The fire was noticed by Eugene Meadows who was working next door and alerted the fire department around 9pm. The wind that night, however, fanned the flames and the mill was completely consumed by the time the fire department arrived. They could not save the mill, but they did save two adjacent smaller buildings. Thankfully, no one was injured in the fire. The owner, John R. Edgewood, Sr., put the loss at an estimated $300,000 - which equates to more than $2.5 million in today's dollars. Mr. Edgewood, Sr. promised to rebuild the mill as quickly as possible and get all 60 mill employees back to work as soon as possible.

Education Updates
By Andrea Hadsell

This spring the History Center embarked on a new journey in offering online resources. We created an online virtual tour so that students and their families could still explore our log cabin and one-room schoolhouse! This is an exciting new digital offering we hope to continue through a partnership with the Advanced Visualization Lab in UITS Research Technologies at Indiana University.

Above: A view inside the log cabin at the History Center.

With the new online engagement during our temporary closure, we plan to continue our online resources as we reopen. From virtual programming for families during the summer, to new in-person presentations and programming in the fall, we are committed to sharing our community’s history with you.

We hope to see you all soon!
Monroe County Historical Society’s
Monroe County Historian
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Society established 1905
Museum established 1980

For subscription information contact the
Monroe County History Center at
812-332-2517, or visit
www.monroehistory.org

Collection Spotlight

This "Contagious Disease Within" sign hung on the door of Albert McIlveen at 320 N. Lincoln St., Bloomington.

While we don't want to cause panic, we do hope that this sign illustrates that our community has seen quarantine measures in place before and survived them. If we care for ourselves and our neighbors and listen to our health officials, our community will survive the COVID-19 pandemic.

Membership Form

Annual Membership Levels

- Student $10
- Teacher $20
- Individual $40
- Family/Grandparents $50
- Supporter $100
- Benefactor $250
- Patron $500
- Sponsor $1000
- Sustaining beginning at $10 a month

Check if you are interested in:
- Volunteer Information

Renew online or donate online at:
http://monroehistory.org/join-and-give

Send to:
Monroe County History Center
202 East Sixth Street
Bloomington, IN 47408

Name (please print):
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Address:
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Phone: ________________________
Email: ________________________

Method of Payment
- Visa - Mastercard - Discover - Check

Credit Card Number: ________________________
Expiration Date: ____________  CVC Number: ____________

Signature: ________________________