Sewickley Valley Historical Society

Signals

XLVII, Number 5 May 2020

SVHS Confronts COVID-19

A Message from Harton Semple, President of the Board

The world has been turned upside down by this pandemic, and so it is with the Sewickley Valley Historical Society. The Old Sewickley Post Office, where our headquarters is located, has been closed since the middle of March. Our Spring program had to be cancelled, including the May Annual Meeting at Wilpen Hall. As there was no Annual Meeting and no election took place, the Board appointed the choices of the Nominating Committee, Directors Marty McDaniel and Simon Noel, to continue their service until such time as a quorum of members is present for an election. The lecturers for March and April have made written submissions, which you can read on the following pages of this issue of *Signals*. We wonder if the dictates of social distancing and an older audience will preclude our having lectures at all for the foreseeable future.

However, the collection of Sewickley History, lovingly assembled by the Society over its 47 years of existence, is intact. We have information available about your house, your family and all your community's adventures. Now that Pennsylvania has lifted the stay-at-home order, our staff will be resuming office hours and will be able to assist you in your research, using our extensive database. Since it is unclear when our co-tenant, Sweetwater Center for the Arts, will be permitted to open the building to hold classes and summer camps, this research must be done by phone (412-741-5315) or through email (info@sewickleyhistory.org). At present, any face-to-face meeting will have to be scheduled for outside the building, in the B. G. Shields memorial garden.

We are glad to be out of the house and back to work, and we welcome a new Executive Director-in-Training, Amanda Schaffer (see below). Thank you, dear members of the Historical Society, for your patience during this strange time and for your unfailingly loyal support of the vision of B. G. Shields to collect, codify and present the story of this big little community. Please watch for the President's letter toward the end of June, which will contain updates and ask for the payment of dues for the year 2020-2021.

Sewickley Valley Historical Society's new Executive Director-in-Training, Amanda Schaffer, is a native Pittsburgher. Her first home was in Bloomfield, then Penn Hills, where she attended Penn Hills Senior High School before graduating from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in History with minors in Art History and Anthropology.

In her summers, she volunteered at the Heinz History Center in its Library and Archives. While pursuing her history degree, she became involved with various student activities, becoming the president of the history honors society Phi Alpha Theta and an executive board member of the Bloomsburg University Program Board. It was at Bloomsburg that she found her love of public programming and engagement.

With the experience gained there, she shifted course from a planned career in Archives to Public History and attended Middle Tennessee State University, where she earned her M.A. in Public History with a certificate in Museum Management.

She took that degree with her to Philadelphia, where she lived and worked for the past four years, first with National History Day and then at a Quaker historic site that existed as a burial ground and then as a Quaker meetinghouse.

After years of moving in and out of Pittsburgh for school and work, coming back for family functions and to volunteer every year at the Pittsburgh Irish Festival, it felt like it was time to be closer to family, and she made the move back to Pittsburgh last November. Even while living in our eastern state rival city, she always took immense pride in the city of Pittsburgh, and she looks forward to channeling that pride into her work for SVHS.

Spanish Influenza 1918

from *History of the Sewickley Valley Found in Sewickley Cemetery*

The flu pandemic of 1918 was an horrendous event that occurred just as World War I was ending. As a consequence, it was somewhat neglected by history, but it was searingly real to those who experienced it. There were far more casualties in this valley from influenza than from the World War, and influenza still presents today one of the greatest threats to humankind.

The danger with viruses such as influenza is their capacity to evolve by occupying new hosts. The influenza of 1918 hit the United States in two waves: spring, when it struck military camps throughout the country; and fall, when it was reintroduced from Europe by troops returning from the war. The virus spent the summer in a nonhuman host, most likely swine or birds, and mutated. The spring infection, although highly contagious, caused relatively few deaths. The second infection was a different matter entirely. It swept the globe in six months. There were at least 30 to 40 million deaths worldwide. 25% of Americans were infected, and 675,000 died, including 43,000 servicemen. The effects of the second wave of infection were felt in the United States most painfully from September through November, and then the flu vanished again.

In the United States it all began on March 11, 1918, when a soldier at Camp Funston, Kansas, named Albert Mitchell, reported to the infirmary with typical flu symptoms, headache, sore throat, muscle pain. He was sent to bed. Within a few hours 100 soldiers were sick, and, within two days, more than 500. A few were soon ill with a secondary bacterial infection, pneumonia, but most survived, sick for only a few days. The flu quickly spread around the country. The flu had visited elsewhere in the world that spring. There was a well-publicized outbreak in Spain that gave its name to this strain of influenza, although it did not originate there. In these places, too, the flu disappeared with the coming of summer.

In fall, the flu was back with a vengeance, ravaging Asia, India, Japan, China, the Caribbean, and parts of Central and South America. The second wave of the flu arrived in the United States in August among a group of sailors who docked in Boston. Shortly the illness spread to Camp Devens near Boston and then moved outward. The disease moved quickly through most every city and town in the land and in each place threatened catastrophe. About 20 percent of the victims had a mild case and recovered without incident, but others became deathly ill. Some displayed a bluish complexion with purple blisters and were prostrated by hoarse hacking breathing. Eventually the lungs would fill with a bloody foamy fluid drowning the victim. Others contracted pneumonia and either succumbed or faced long convalescence. Surviving victims faced an increased risk from tuberculosis. The other terrifying thing about this flu is that it struck down strong and healthy individuals, including soldiers, not, as was customary, the elderly or very young. There were many orphans. The birth rate in some countries was adversely affected by this event for a number of years. The world's population has tripled since 1918, so a similar infection today would claim 100 million victims worldwide, and this in the course of a few months. The second wave of the 1918 flu moved quickly to even the most remote places. In the Arctic, whole villages of Eskimos were devastated. Often casualties overwhelmed the ability of the uninfected to cope, but that was not the case in the Sewickley Valley.

The crisis began here in early October 1918, when Franklin Noyer, the Commissioner of Health for the State of Pennsylvania, warned, "Due to the spreading of Spanish Influenza, which in other states has proven to be greatly accelerated by public meeting, the Board has ordered the immediate closing of all places of amusement, including theatres, moving picture houses, dance halls, pool rooms and saloons until further notice." The closing of schools, Sunday schools and churches was left to the discretion of local Boards of Health. The Sewickley and Edgeworth Boards of Health were prepared, as was the Sewickley Hospital and the Red Cross Disaster Committee. All of these organizations were already active because of the World War, which had not ended yet. Two physicians, Dr. John Walters (1873-1936) of Sewickley and Dr. Robert S. Dickson (1874-1956) of Edgeworth, already bearing a heavy burden of care as most of their colleagues had gone off to war, managed the community's effort. Both lie in Sewickley Cemetery, Walters in Section D, Lot 64, and Dickson in Section A, Lot 77. They and their helpers are local heroes, who at great personal risk to themselves nursed the contagious sick. Remember there were no immunizations back then, although having a case of the mild flu in the spring before did apparently afford some protection.

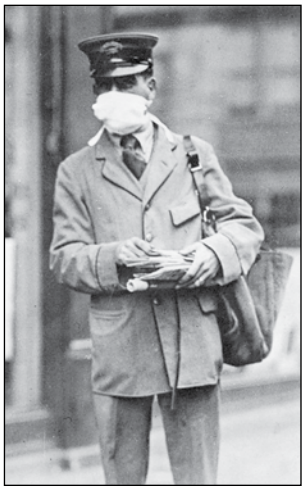
The local Boards of Health called off a Liberty Loan parade and closed up the Sewickley Theatre. Next came the order closing all public and private schools in the valley, churches and Sunday schools. All public gatherings of any kind were prohibited, including concerts and lodge meetings. Funerals were to be private, limited to members of the family. Doctor Walters stated, "The Spanish influenza is an air-borne disease and Sewickley has suffered more than many other communities on account of the large amount of travel done by the citizens. There is no need for alarm, but there is much need for intelligent action. If proper precautions are taken in regard to sanitation and possible contact, the progress of the disease can soon be checked." One week later there were 250 infected and 8 deaths. The Presbyterian Church House was readied to accommodate patients to relieve crowding at Sewickley Valley Hospital, where eight student nurses had contracted the influenza. The *Sewickley Herald* opined, "One of the war's real horrors is now coming right home to us here in Sewickley. Let us meet it with the Sewickley spirit! There are no public meetings, no community sings, voices are mute in speech and song, while a silent effort is being made to induce persons to subscribe to the Fourth Liberty Loan. The air is filled with suspicion and onion fumes, and woe to the person who sneezes in public—he is shunned like a German. At the bank customers have to do business through windows barred with cheesecloth, in addition to the traditional bronze bars and plate glass. The town was dead before this, unkind persons have said, but now it is deader."

The Edgeworth Public School building was requisitioned by the Edgeworth Board of Health and fitted up with fifty beds and two nurses. The October 26th Herald reported that Cochran Hose was washing down all the streets, which was thought to aid materially in combating the epidemic. By then there were 589 cases in Sewickley, with 11 deaths.

A week later, the beginning of November, the flu seemed on the wane.On November 9th the state flu ban on assembly of October 4th was rescinded, and although infections continued to occur and there were some closings at the end of November, a modicum of normal life began to return to the valley.

The *Herald* spoke for all: "Normal community life is to be resumed today with churches, library, schools, lectures, moving pictures and all the social occasions which have been so greatly missed in our lives these past weeks. Perhaps it is a good thing for many of us to realize how much all of these things mean to us after all. The ban has cost us much, both as a community and individually. We fervently trust that we will never again be placed under such a misfortune."

Dr. Walters addressed Sewickley Council. "Sewickley got through the epidemic very well. Our hospitals answered the purpose admirably, and with the help of the Red Cross were able to give the patients the best of attention. The hospitals could have been filled to overflowing with patients had it not been for the splendid work of the ladies of Sewickley, who supplied soup and other food and lent a hand in caring for patients in their homes, thus making it unnecessary to bring them to the hospital. It was common to find whole families sick at once, so that none of them could nurse or care for the others. A good proportion of our population was infected, but our death rate has been remarkably low."



By December there were 950 cases in Sewickley, with more than 20 deaths, and Edgeworth recorded having treated 64 patients in their hospital with 8 deaths. Each municipality incurred expenses of about $2500 in defense of the public health. Deaths occurred on into the winter, but the worst had passed. It had been frightful, especially as society itself was threatened for a time. One was encouraged not to make social calls, not to visit the sick, to send a card instead, and one can pity the poor postman who made his rounds with a gauze mask on.

Golden Age Skyscrapers

By Mark Houser, a Pittsburgh speaker and writer. He shares stories of America's early millionaires and the explosion of raw economic power, new technologies, and societal disruption they unleashed on their world — and the amazing skyscrapers they left behind.

As skylines go, Pittsburgh's is better than most. Despite the gaudy corporate logos that tarnish some of the most prominent towers like cheap tiaras, the view from Mt. Washington is still one of the most captivating vistas in America. Each October, when I ride to the summit of the Duquesne Incline with a new group of European professionals in town for a leadership development program, I get to appreciate Pittsburgh's striking beauty all over again.

My favorite skyscraper is not the easiest one to spot. It's the **Arrott Building**, a candy-striped column 18 stories tall at the corner of Fourth and Wood streets. It was designed by Frederick Osterling and built in 1902 for James Arrott. Digging through old newspaper archives, I uncovered surprising details I'd never heard about both of those men and about the building's construction. For starters, Arrott wasn't just some guy with a local insurance business, which was all a Google search could turn up. He was the "Bathtub King of Pittsburgh."

I pitched this to *Pittsburgh Magazine* a few years ago as the first installment for a monthly feature about antique skyscrapers, and "MultiStories" was born. It was fun sifting through the long-forgotten history of some of the city's most venerable architecture, particularly the Machesney (aka the Benedum-Trees), the Keenan, and German National Bank. People love these old skyscraper stories. I've been invited to talk about them on WESA's morning program and for Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, and this summer and fall I will again lead private tours of some of them for Doors Open Pittsburgh.

Working on these stories reminded me how even famous and powerful people gradually fade from our memory. The Arrotts and Machesneys and Keenans are overshadowed and blotted out by the new. But their stories are still there to amaze and inspire us if we know where and how to look, just as their old antique skyscrapers can still be windows into a fantastic but still faintly familiar era.

This is true not only in Pittsburgh but in every city in America. I know, because for more than a year I've been traveling around the country for a new book of these vignettes of forgotten history. *MultiStories: 55 Antique Skyscrapers & the Business Tycoons Who Built Them* — out this fall in paperback and ebook — is full of Gilded Age entrepreneurial success stories and beautiful landmark buildings that you can still visit today, in 31 cities across America plus 5 international cities.

You can read a free preiew of the book and reserve an advance copy signed by the author at HouserTalks.com. There you will also find more stories about Pittsburgh antique skyscrapers. The following articles are excerpted from Houser's "Multistories" series and originally appeared in 2018 in *Pittsburgh Magazine*.

Home of the Bathtub King — The Arrott Building

The Arrott Building
Address: 401 Wood St.
Stories: 18
Height: 256 ft.
Built: 1902
Architect: Frederick Osterling

James Arrott, the Bathtub King of Pittsburgh, is nearly forgotten today, just as his striped skyscraper at Fourth and Wood now is overshadowed by far taller buildings. But both he and the building named after him are testaments to the extravagance of their day.

James Arrott

An Irish immigrant from County Donegal, Arrott established a fire insurance business here in 1859. He invested some of his profits into a bankrupt North Side iron foundry, renamed it the Standard Manufacturing Co., and added a new offering to the product line: enameled iron bathtubs.

Homeowners went mad for the gleaming white tubs, which looked much more sanitary than the tin tubs in general use at the time. In 1899, with a new factory churning out 200 tubs a day, Arrott orchestrated a merger with his competitors to form the conglomerate that would become American Standard. Desiring a skyscraper for his insurance and bathtub businesses and additional offices to rent, he called on the city's most celebrated young architect.

Frederick Osterling

Before age 30, Frederick Osterling already had designed several office towers in Pittsburgh. But the 18-story Arrott Building would be his first true skyscraper. Osterling went big with a showy Venetian motif; beyond the 21 columns in the structure, plans also called for two ostentatious but pointless freestanding marble pillars on the sidewalk flanking the entrance. Critics objected that they would impede traffic. When Osterling defied them, the city sent police to arrest the workmen and blamed the architect for inciting a riot. Revised plans sank two half-columns into the entry façade instead; even they were chopped off a couple decades later. (You can still see the scars.)

On Oct. 4, 1901, a crane at the construction site broke, dropping four tons of steel beams that barely missed a streetcar full of commuters. Later that night, at his 36th birthday bash, Osterling toasted his luck as his friends presented him with a marble bust of Venus. The next year, the Arrott Building was completed.

Poor James Arrott only got to enjoy his namesake skyscraper for a few months before dying of a stroke. His sons stayed in bathtubs, so to speak; in 1910 they landed in hot water in a price-fixing scandal when feds busted the so-called "bathtub trust." By 1950, the Arrott's froufrou facade was so far out of fashion that another immigrant, Albanian Gregory Speros, bought it with the profits from his Downtown sandwich shop.

After decades of relative disuse, the building was acquired by HRI Properties of New Orleans. It is being renovated into a boutique hotel for Marriott, with plans for an opening this October.

Howling masks along the cornice

A look from the vertigo-inducing stairwell from the top floor

The Lady's Skyscraper — The Machesney Building

The Machesney Building

Address: 221 Fourth Ave.
Stories: 19
Height: 210 feet
Built: 1906
Architect: Thomas H. Scott

Caroline Machesney wasn't the first person to build a skyscraper in Pittsburgh, but she was the first person to sell one. In doing so, the celebrated society hostess forfeited her chance at lasting fame. When she died in 1952 at the age of 97, the obituary mentioned her club membership — but not the Machesney Building.

The daughter of a local banker, Caroline "Oline" Jones spent much of her life entertaining. Former President Rutherford B. Hayes attended a fireworks party at the large house she shared for years with her widowed mother and two unmarried brothers. In 1899, Jones was 44, the sole inheritor of the family fortune and newly married to North Side attorney Haines Allen Machesney. They had a son, Haines Jr., a year later. In 1905, the year Caroline Jones Machesney turned 50, she commissioned a lavishly appointed skyscraper wedged between a bank and the city stock exchange on Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh's version of Wall Street. Visitors can still ogle the lavish marble and bronze interior crafted to appeal to her banker and stockbroker tenants.

Months after the opening, a passerby tripped and broke her foot on a freight elevator door jutting from the sidewalk out front. A jury awarded the victim $4,480 in damages; the Pennsylvania Supreme Court upheld the verdict in 1913. Later that year, Machesney sold her skyscraper for $1 million to two oil men who rechristened it the Benedum-Trees Building (after themselves). Machesney turned to social causes, including chairing the organizing committee of the Pittsburgh Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. She also directed plays at the Twentieth Century Club, a private association for well-to-do.

As for the oil men, Joe Trees didn't need a skyscraper to be famous. A star football player at the University of Pittsburgh in the very earliest days of the sport (when touchdowns still counted for 4 points), he later met Michael Benedum in the West Virginia oil fields; they became lifelong business partners. Both lost sons during World War I, although not in combat; young Joe Trees fell out of a plane in England, while Claude Benedum died in the 1918 flu pandemic.

In memory of their boy, the Benedums started a charitable foundation, which is based in the building to this day. Another foundation occupies opulent quarters on the top floors: Bill Benter, a math whiz from Pleasant Hills who made his fortune beating Las Vegas blackjack tables and Hong Kong horse racetracks, now gives back to Pittsburgh through his Benter Foundation.

Three Times a Bust — The German National Bank

The German National Bank

Address: 313 Sixth Ave.
Stories: 9
Height: 125 feet
Built: 1889
Architects: Charles Bickel &
John Brennan

Standing like a slender castle with its parapets and rough-hewn arches, the structure at the corner of Wood Street and Sixth Avenue looks built to survive stormy weather. A good thing too, since it has been the scene of three separate bank failures.

German immigrant Christopher Groetzinger opened a leather tannery on the North Side in 1851. His son, Adolph, bought and expanded the business, which made high-end shoe soles; the younger Groetzinger also became president of the German National Bank of Pittsburgh, one of the first federally chartered banks in the city. The bank prospered as immigration snowballed; in 1889, it began construction of a new Downtown building. Drawn up by German-trained architect Charles Bickel, the Romanesque edifice paid homage to H. H. Richardson's much-praised new county courthouse.

A decade later, the bank was forced to close when Groetzinger declared bankruptcy and resigned. It reopened only to become the scene of the crime in a colossal city corruption scandal. In 1908, Councilman John Klein paid a visit to inform the bank's new president, William Ramsey, that for $15,000 he could arrange for German National Bank to be designated a city depository. Ramsey had his cashier withdraw several large bills from the safe and place them on a desk in front of Klein, whom they then left alone in the office. When they returned, the bills and Klein were gone.

(continued on next page)

But the brazen official flashed his wad of cash around a bit too much, and one startled harness dealer tipped off the city auditor. Klein was arrested, along with Ramsey, the cashier and six other councilmen. Several trials and investigations later, a jaw-dropping 98 of the city's 155 councilmen were indicted for graft. Public outrage led to a reform crusade that replaced the elephantine city assembly with the nine-member body that remains today.

The bank was liquidated, its former headquarters converted to offices known as the Granite Building. A new owner modernized the sidewalk façade along Sixth Street for storefronts in 1928. In 1986, Pennsylvania's largest savings and loan, Atlantic Financial, made the building its regional headquarters, replacing the storefronts with smooth granite walls and arched windows reminiscent of the originals. Four years later, Atlantic lost $602 million in the savings and loan crisis; its assets, including the Granite Building, were sold off.

By 2005, when Shaler native, journalist and author Holly Brubach bought the building, it was vacant except for a beauty supply store. She had it gutted for upscale condos; then came the recession. Efforts to make it a boutique hotel could not secure financing, so Brubach plans to turn it back into offices, with a restaurant or retail space on the ground floor.

Gilded Glory — The Keenan Building

In 1908, when reporter Gertrude Gordon flew over Pittsburgh in a hot air balloon, one landmark immediately caught her eye. The Keenan Building, she wrote, was "conspicuous because of its huge gilded dome." Though the roof of the skyscraper now known as Midtown Towers was painted red long ago, it still crowns one of Pittsburgh's most distinctive high rises.

Thomas Keenan Jr. was the 24-year-old city editor of the *Pittsburgh Times* in 1884 when he rounded up investors, bought the paper he worked for and relaunched it as the *Evening Penny Press*. Five years later, he and a team of three reporters with the now-renamed *Pittsburgh Press* were among the first on the scene covering the Johnstown Flood.

As his paper's circulation grew, Keenan mastered publicity. The *Press* sponsored a bicycle race team and a regatta and raised money to build a home for orphan newsboys and erect a statue of Stephen Foster, which now has become too controversial to remain on display. It also organized a military-style drill team, The Press Cadets, whose members enlisted *en masse* for the Spanish-American War, earning Keenan the rank of lieutenant colonel in the National Guard.

Keenan sold the *Press* in 1901 and invested his profits in Downtown real estate. In 1907, construction began on his 18-story office tower, the first skyscraper on Liberty Avenue. When it opened the next year, it featured bas-reliefs of important figures, including the mayor, governor and president — plus the head of the chamber of commerce (the organization moved its offices into Keenan's building).

The former newshound then dove into political causes, leading a crusade against city hall corruption. Perhaps the rumor about Keenan, which still persists, was started by a political enemy; gossip claimed that the top floor was Keenan's bachelor pad penthouse and a sordid den of fornication. It is true that hundreds of women went up to the 18th floor, but they weren't going to see Keenan — a secretarial school operated there from 1923 until 1951.

The original tenant under the dome, a photo studio, went bankrupt after a year, and the space was occasionally rented out for banquets until the school moved in. Keenan, in fact, had a house in East Liberty and later moved to Girard, near Erie, where he died in 1927, still single.

His building changed hands repeatedly but stayed an office tower until 1971, when it was converted into federally subsidized housing and renamed Midtown Towers. In 2017, a seven-alarm fire there killed one elderly woman and forced the other tenants out. New owner Beacon Communities has gutted and renovated the interior and added a new sprinkler system. They have also turned the long-disused and unfairly maligned 18th floor into a shared space for tenants.

The Keenan Building
Address: 643 Liberty Ave.
Stories: 18
Height: 239 ft.
Built: 1907
Architect: Thomas Hannah

Rules for Influenza

by Dr. Connie Ruzich, from *http://www.behindtheirlines.blogspot.com/*

In September of 1918, a physician wrote from Camp Devens, Massachusetts, "It is only a matter of a few hours … until death comes and it is simply a struggle for air until they suffocate. It is horrible. One can stand to see one, two, or twenty men die, but to see these poor devils dropping like flies gets on your nerves. We have been averaging about 100 deaths a day, and still keeping it up."[i] Colonel Victor C. Vaughan, former president of the American Medical Association, also visited the US military camp and reported, "In the morning the dead bodies are stacked about the morgue like cord wood. This picture was painted on my memory cells at the division hospital, Camp Devens, in the fall of 1918, when the deadly influenza virus demonstrated the inferiority of human interventions in the destruction of human life."[ii]

Some Americans thought that the 1918 influenza virus was a German weapon of war, released by enemy agents who had arrived in Boston with vials of the germs; others suspected that the German pharmaceutical company Bayer had mixed the virus into aspirin.[iii] German propaganda blamed the illness on Chinese laborers employed by the Allied Powers."[iv]

By the end of the world-wide pandemic, at least 20 million had died; estimates range from 20 – 100 million, with most experts believing more than 50 million were killed by the virus. What became known as Spanish Influenza was particularly fatal to healthy adults between the ages of 20 and 40.

With no known cure, most efforts were directed at stopping the spread of the illness. Historian David McCullough writes, "In Boston the stock market closed. In Pennsylvania a statewide order shut down every place of amusement, every saloon. In Kentucky the Board of Health prohibited public gatherings of any kind, even funerals."[v] And an Albuquerque New Mexico newspaper wrote, "the ghost of fear walked everywhere, causing many a family circle to reunite because of the different members having nothing else to do but stay home."[vi]

In the chaos and uncertainty that accompanied the virulent pandemic, lists of practical health guidelines were published in nearly every major newspaper. One writer used poetry to spread the message:

RULES FOR INFLUENZA

Oh, shun the common drinking cup,
Avoid the kiss and hug,
For in them all there lurks that Hun,
The influenza bug.

Cough not, nor sneeze when in a crowd;
'Tis neither kind nor neat,
Because it scatters germs around.
So try to be discreet.

Lick not the thumb in turn o'er
The papers in your file,
And wear your health mask, though you look
Like time. Forget it. Smile.

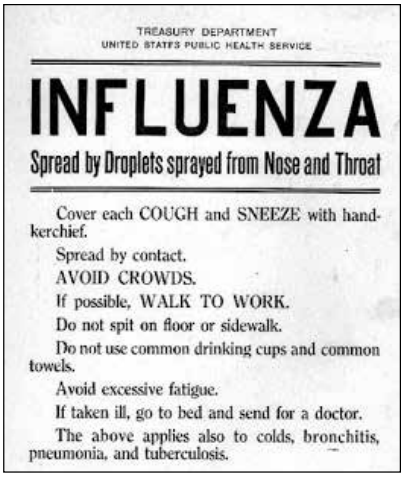
Remember doorknobs harbor germs,
So wash before you eat.
Avoid the flying clouds of dust
While walking on the street.

Most anything you do—or don't—
Is apt to cause disease,
So don't do anything you do
Without precautions, please.

—Dr. Waters (Chemistry)

St. Louis Red Cross, October 1918
(National Archives)

Nurses in Boston Hospital in Flu Masks
(National Archives)



TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

INFLUENZA

Spread by Droplets sprayed from Nose and Throat

Cover each COUGH and SNEEZE with handkerchief.
Spread by contact.
AVOID CROWDS.
If possible, WALK TO WORK.
Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.
Do not use common drinking cups and common towels.
Avoid excessive fatigue.
If taken ill, go to bed and send for a doctor.
The above applies also to colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.

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Sewickley, PA 15143

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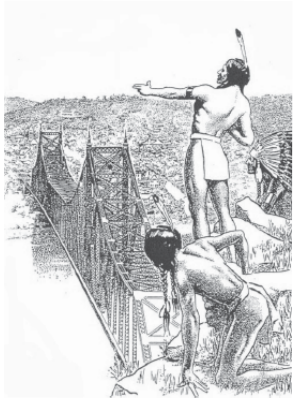

May 2020

The poem's author, Dr. C. E. Waters, worked during the First World War at the Bureau of Standards as chief of the Organic Chemistry section. Prior to the war, he had taught at Connecticut Agricultural College and Johns Hopkins University. The poem appears in *The Great War at Home and Abroad: The World War I Diaries and Letters of W. Stull Holt.* In a letter dated October 25, 1918, Holt's fiancée, Lois Crump, included the verse with the note, "I am enclosing some stuff which may make you laugh" (Crump worked at the Bureau of Standards).[vii]

Little has changed in preventing the spread of viral pandemics. Dusty streets and common drinking cups are no longer common, but hand-washing, avoiding close contact, staying at home, and using humor to cope with uncertainty and fear remain very much the same.

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[i]Gina Kolata, *Flu*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999, p. 14.
[ii]Kolata, *Flu*, p. 16.
[iii]Kolata, *Flu*, p. 3.
[iv]J.N. Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, p. 390
[v]David McCullough, "Foreword" in Lynette Iezzoni, *Influenza 1918*, TV Books, 1999, foreword, p. 7.
[vi]Kolata, *Flu*, p. 23.
[vii]Maclyn P. Burg and Thomas J. Pressly, editors, *The Great War at Home and Abroad: The World War I Diaries and Letters of W. Stull Holt*, Sunflower UP, 1998, p. 263.

Special Contribution

George H. & Susan D. Craig Fund
of The Pittsburgh Foundation

New Member

Terry L. Smith, Sewickley

Signals is designed and edited by Susan C. Holton. Visit our website, www.sewickleyhistory.org — e-mail us at info@sewickleyhistory.org — or call us at 412-741-5315. We're open 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, or by appointment.