

# Yolo County Historical Society



## Prez Says

There isn't much to say this month. How strange! We have had to cancel two meetings and all the information I receive is focused on this virus.

This newsletter is devoted to the Spanish Flu of 1918. I've included some information from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) including a timeline and I have also included a newspaper article co-written by our David Wilkinson and Jim Smith about the flu in Yolo County. I'm sure after reading this newsletter, you will say to yourself – there is nothing new in history! Today's reactions are the same as they were 100 years ago! That's what makes history fascinating. Look to the past – it's all there.

There is some news that I can share with you. The *Stroll Through History* cancelled their program this year. They decided that with the numbers of people and the open houses, it would be difficult to practice 'social distancing'. They have asked us to partner with them for 2021. As soon as I find out what that means, I will share that information.

The *Native Sons of the Golden West* organization, under the direction of Dino Gay, wants to offer a stroll through Woodland's Chinatown. They have asked us to help with that project and I have agreed. We have a remarkable opportunity to highlight the Chinese historical immigration in our county. This discussion is in its infancy. More to come.

Obviously our **First Friday History Happenings** has come to a halt. We did not go into the Chicago Café. So, when we can begin again, they will be the first business we will visit.

I hope you saw the wonderful donation we received from the Betty Bigelow family. The furniture is all dark red velvet and quite lovely. The prices posted were for the value of the items (see last month's *newsletter*). We will take less. Remember that if you buy something, it is a tax deduction to a nonprofit. Please pass on the information to others.

I have included an article, **An Outing** (page 7), that I sent to our Facebook editor, Rob Coman. It is designed for school age children, but it can be fun for adults too.

Take care, stay healthy. Remember, as always,

History Rules!

Kathy Harryman, President

If you are getting a mailed copy of this newsletter, please consider receiving a digital copy instead. It saves us around \$1.50 per person per mailing. Please let me know, Kathy Harryman [khwoodland@aol.com](mailto:khwoodland@aol.com).

### Business Buddies

Please support these local businesses. They support the Yolo County Historical Society.

**The House Dresser**

**Corner Drug**

**Local Inspirations**

**Simas Family Vineyard**

## History of 1918 Flu Pandemic

The 1918 influenza pandemic was the most severe pandemic in recent history. It was caused by an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin. Although there is not a universal consensus regarding where the virus originated, it spread worldwide during 1918-1919. In the United States, it was first identified in military personnel in spring 1918.

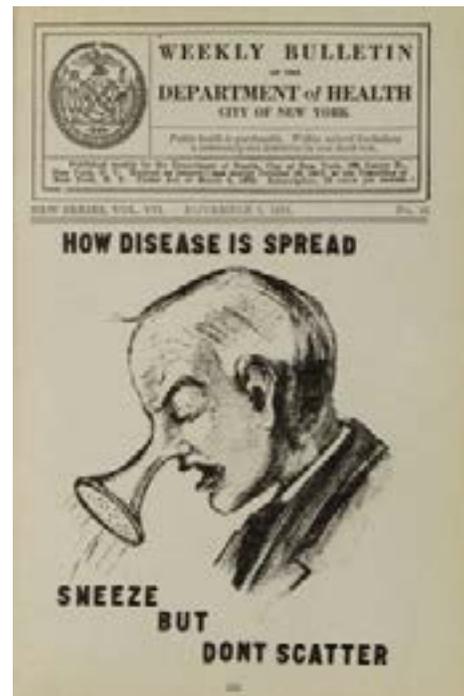
It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States. Mortality was high in people younger than 5 years old, 20-40 years old, and 65 years and older. The high mortality in healthy people, including those in the 20 to 40-years age group, was a unique feature of this pandemic.

With no vaccine to protect against influenza infection and no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections that can be associated with influenza infections, control efforts worldwide were limited to non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants, and limitations of public gatherings, which were applied unevenly.



Policemen in Seattle wearing masks made by the Red Cross.

[cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/1918-pandemic-history.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/1918-pandemic-history.htm)



[nytimes.com/2020/04/02/nyregion/spanish-flu-nyc-virus.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/nyregion/spanish-flu-nyc-virus.html)

## Timeline of the Spanish Flu in the United States 1918

- April 1917 U.S enters World War I with 378,000 in the armed services.
- June 1917 A draft is established to increase the number of soldiers. Army begins training recruits at 32 large camps, each housing 25,000-55,000 soldiers.
- March 1918 Outbreaks of flu-like illness are first detected in U.S. – 100+ soldiers at Camp Funston in Kansas become ill with flu. Flu activity spreads through U.S, Europe and Asia.
- April 1918 First mention of influenza appears in April 5 weekly public health report.
- May 1918 Hundreds of thousands of soldiers travel across the Atlantic each month to fight the war. 14,000 flu cases emerge at Camp Devens near Boston. New York City’s Board of Health requires all flu cases to be isolated at home or in a city hospital.
- October 1918 195,000 Americans die during this month. Severe shortages of professional nurses. Volunteers are encouraged. Major cities close theaters, movie houses, night schools and prohibit public gatherings. San Francisco Board of Health requires wearing masks in public.
- November 1918 End of the war, 4.7 million soldiers return home. Quarantine signs were placed on front and rear doors of homes and businesses where occupants had been struck with flu.



Boys returning home.

- December 1918 Public health officials begin education programs about the dangers of coughing and sneezing. Stores and factories begin to stagger opening and closing hours. People are encouraged to walk to work.
- January 1919 Third wave of flu occurs. Many large cities report large number of infected residents and deaths. In San Francisco, 1,800 flu cases were reported with 101 deaths in the first 5 days of January.
- February 1919 Influenza reported cases decrease. Bills are passed to create a one-year course to become a ‘practical nurse’.

## But What About Yolo County?

*On April 5, 2020, Jim Smith, editor of the Daily Democrat wrote an article entitled “100 years ago the world faced a similar pandemic as today’s coronavirus” With help from David Wilkinson’s research, we can form a picture of our community. Here is a timeline and highlights from articles in the Daily Democrat from October 1918 to December 1918.*

### October 22, 1918

The Byrns Hotel (where the Hotel Woodland currently stands) was turned into an emergency hospital to “care for any influenza cases where home treatment was unavailable.” “Cots, bedding, lighting, heating and other expenses will be assumed by the county. Dr. Milton Bransford was named chairman of the committee. Isolation was very important in caring for the influenza cases so it is planned to place each patient in a separate room.” “There is an absolute and promising need of a volunteer nursing corps and the health authorities would like to see a demonstration of civic spirit from the women who have taken the ‘first aid’ and ‘home care of the sick’ courses.”

The Red Cross was also given “complete charge” off all matters pertaining to the securing of nurses and caring for the patients and providing for their maintenance.

### October 23, 1918

Woodland schools were suspended to check the spread of the flu. “At first it was thought it would not be necessary to close the schools, but while most of the cases in Woodland ‘are of a light nature, it was believed advisable to check, as far as possible.’ The schools were expected to be closed until “such time as it is deemed safe to reopen them.”



Byrns Hotel

### October 24, 1918

The Woodland Library was ordered closed and will remain closed for the duration of the epidemic. But those having checked out books from the library will become delinquent during the closure and “will have 23 hours in which to return them after the library is reopened.”

### October 28, 1918

A “mask ordinance” was required. Dr. Newton said “The problem is different from any we have ever had to face before. With six deaths already from the dread disease, something should be done to check the further spread of the malady aside from providing a place for the care of those who become afflicted.”

Newton also said she had gotten some 500 doses of “anti-influenza vaccine” from the Board of Health in San Francisco which will be used for treatment. The vaccine was called “Jeremiah O’Leary anti-influenza vaccine.”<sup>1</sup>

### October 29, 1918<sup>2</sup>

City trustees passed an ordinance requiring the “wearing of gauze masks over the mouth and nostrils of persons appearing in public.” All public places were closed, and all large gatherings were banned.

*continued on the next page*

**But What About Yolo County?** - *continued from preceding page*

**November 1918**

The Daily Democrat reported that a “high watermark for the number of cases to be cared for in the city” had been noted at 45. Since the hospital first opened on Oct. 22, nearly 75 patients had been treated and “only five deaths have resulted, these cases being already far gone when entered.” “There are at present 45 patients receiving treatment in the hospital.”

**November 5, 1918<sup>2</sup>**

The Red Cross began offering free vaccination against the flu.

**November 19, 1918**

Because there was a decline in the number of cases, the emergency hospital was being closed. But its existence contributed to “checking the spread of the disease and prevented many more deaths.” As the cases wound down, the inevitable rumors of an increase started to be reported with some urging another quarantine, although health officials said there was no need.

**December 16, 1918**

An isolation ward was prepared at the “county infirmary, where all cases of persons, who have no home to go to and who become ill with Spanish influenza, will be cared for. The move is taken in order to finally close up the institution at the Byrns hotel.”

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<sup>1</sup> Could not find any references to this anti-influenza vaccine

<sup>2</sup> These items were taken from *Woodland City of Trees: A History* by Shipley Walters

**Patrons**

Thanks so much to the following for supporting the Yolo County Historical Society. We could not run this organization without your additional help.

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## Epidemics and Humans

by Kathy Harryman

Epidemics are not new to humankind. As early as 1545, there was a major smallpox epidemic in India. In 1679 smallpox hit the Iroquois Indians in the North American continent. Typhoid fever killed Henry, Prince of Wales, in 1699. Yellow fever has been in the Americas since 1699. In 1899 there was a major outbreak of yellow fever while building the Panama Canal. Smallpox hit the Confederacy during the Civil War and measles attacked the Union army. In 1921 Franklin Delano Roosevelt was struck with polio. Cholera has had seven major worldwide epidemics. Diphtheria was prevalent during World War I in Europe. And who can forget Typhoid Mary in 1909, a housekeeper, who infected all the houses she cleaned? The list goes on with anthrax, tuberculosis, and rabies rearing their ugly heads.

People have always tried to find a cure for these illnesses. Today we immunize individuals through a series of injections. But when did that all start? In the 17th century, the Chinese Buddhist monks drank snake venom to confer immunity to the snake bite. They also smeared a skin tear with cowpox to confer immunity to smallpox. In 1796, Edward Jenner, considered the founder of vaccinology, inoculated a 13 year-old boy with *vaccinia* virus (cowpox), and demonstrated immunity to smallpox. In 1798, the first smallpox vaccine was developed. Over the 18th and 19th centuries, systematic implementation of mass smallpox immunization culminated in its global eradication in 1979.

In 1897, Louis Pasteur's experiments spearheaded the development of the cholera vaccine and in 1904, he discovered an anthrax vaccine. Between 1890 and 1950, bacterial vaccine development multiplied rapidly, including the Bacillus-Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccination for tuberculosis, which is in use today.

In 1923, Alexander Glenny perfected a method to inactivate tetanus toxin with formaldehyde. The same method was used to develop a vaccine against diphtheria in 1926. Pertussis vaccine development took considerably longer, with a whole cell vaccine first licensed for use in the US in 1948.

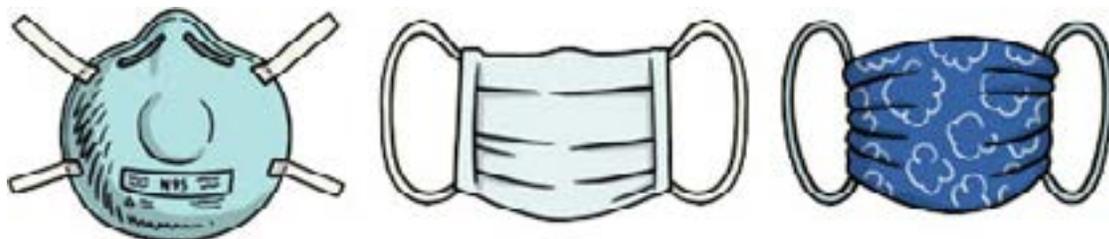
Viral tissue culture methods were developed from 1950-1985 and led to the advent of the Salk (inactivated) polio vaccine and the Sabin (live attenuated oral) polio vaccine. Mass polio immunization has now eradicated the disease from many regions around the world. Measles, mumps and rubella vaccines were developed.

Today, we are still finding cures to diseases.

For more details, see

[historyofvaccines.org/timeline#EVT\\_102230](https://historyofvaccines.org/timeline#EVT_102230)

[immune.org.nz/vaccines/vaccine-development/brief-history-vaccination](https://immune.org.nz/vaccines/vaccine-development/brief-history-vaccination)



## AN OUTING

Are you tired of the enforced shut down? Are you looking for something to do that's a little out of the ordinary? If your answers are yes, then here is an historical suggestion for you and your family.

Yolo County has a wonderful selection of historical cemeteries in each of our communities. I would encourage you to pack a lunch, take your children, and do what the Victorians did. Go to the cemetery and have a picnic. The following is a brief introduction to an internet article you can share with your family.

WITHIN THE IRON-WROUGHT WALLS OF American cemeteries – beneath the shade of oak trees and tombs' stoic penumbras – you could say many people “rest in peace.” However, not so long ago, people of the still-breathing sort gathered in graveyards to rest, and dine, in peace.

During the 19th century, and especially in its later years, snacking in cemeteries happened across the United States. It wasn't just apple-munching alongside the winding avenues of graveyards. Since many municipalities still lacked proper recreational areas, many people had full-blown picnics in their local cemeteries. The tombstone-laden fields were the closest things, then, to modern-day public parks.

[atlasobscura.com/articles/picnic-in-cemeteries-america](https://atlasobscura.com/articles/picnic-in-cemeteries-america)

In the Woodland City Cemetery, you can find graves of the city founders, military veterans, war monuments, graves of educators (Freeman, Dingle, Maxwell, Lee, Whitehead, Douglass, and Gibson), and families that were famous and infamous.

Go on a walk-a-bout. Learn some history. Have fun.



Cottonwood Cemetery, 20499 1st St, Cottonwood, CA 96022