The Spanish Influenza in Indiana County

Alicia Britton, Joe Hildebrand, and Cheyenne Rager
Background

• Spanish Influenza was a strain of Influenza
• Effected so many people because the population was so mobile during WWI
• Many people did not have an immunity to the disease and could not fight it off
Effect throughout the U.S.

• More than 21.6 million people died throughout the U.S.
• Flu hit cities hard so PA was greatly effected
• October 9, 1918: interview with Surgeon General to inform public of what the disease is, how it spreads, and how to treat it
A hospital full of influenza patients.
Many people wore gauze masks in attempt to keep the flu away.
Effect in Indiana County

• First reached county in fall 1918
• Had large effect on surrounding mining towns
• Temporary and emergency hospitals were set up in many coal towns
• Many public places were closed to prevent the spread of disease
  • Even funerals of those that had succumbed to the disease were only attended by immediate family and the minister
• Guards were posted to prevent people from leaving or entering
• Flu did not leave Indiana County until 1919
Indiana Hospital - the open air porches on either end were closed in during the Influenza outbreak to allow for more bed space.
Emergency hospital set up to care for flu patients.
The Flu at Indiana Normal School

- Several students contracted the flu
- October 5, 1918: Quarantine is placed with hopes of preventing an epidemic
- October 7, 1918: Normal school placed under absolute quarantine
  - Students could still attend classes as long as they were in a secure room
- October 10, 1918: 3 reported cases developed at the school
  - In the event of an epidemic the school could be completely isolated with a self sustaining hospital on the grounds
- October 11, 1918: those who have the flu seem to be getting better and no new cases are reported
- October 12, 1918: parents and students are happy with restrictions and quarantine placed on the school
- October 14, 1918: quarantine lifted
Quarantine sign that was on a student’s door during the epidemic.
MISS MARY E. KELSO

"Blessing she is, God made her so,
And deeds of woe she solemn
Fall from her ministrant as the snow,
Your path she ever chanced to know.
That might were ever under tale.

Our beloved friend and nurse, Miss Kelso, is a graduate of West Penn Hospital. After spending twelve years of her life in executive nursing, she was welcomed into our Normal School. For ten years her unifying efforts have resulted in a remarkable health record for the institution.

The class of nineteen hundred nineteen in particular will ever remember Miss Kelso for her skillful management of the influenza situation, and the sacrifice of her desire to become a Red Cross Nurse. Throughout the period of the epidemic, she nursed not only the students of the school but also those enrolled in our Student Army Training Corps.

The sweetness of disposition, the sympathetic, kind, and cheerful nature displayed by Miss Kelso in her arduous duties as school nurse make us feel no other could have filled her place.

Dedication to Mary Kelso in the 1919 Instano

Mary Kelso
Nurse at Indiana Normal School during epidemic
Photos

1. “Uncle Sam’s Advice on Flu.” *Indiana Evening Gazette*. October 9, 1918.
6. “Indiana Hospital 1914” Indiana County 175th Anniversary History by Clarence Stephenson
7. “Indiana Hospital 1918” Indiana County 175th Anniversary History by Clarence Stephenson
9. I. Robins & Son, Pittsburgh PA “Main Building and New Annex, Indiana State Normal School, Indiana Pa” Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County
10. "quarantine lifted from the normal" headline
    “Quarantine Lifted From The Normal.” *Indiana Evening Gazette*. October 14, 1918.
11. quarantine sign from scrapbook
    Scrapbook dating from 1918-1919. Record Group 53 Box 38. Special Collections and Archives, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pennsylvania.
12. Mary Kelso photo and yearbook dedication
Bibliography

• “Eight New Cases Of ‘Flu’ In Indiana.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 25, 1918.
• “Epidemic Costs 1,900,000 Shells.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 25, 1918.
• “Epidemic Disease Causes Six Deaths; Conditions Good Here.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 12, 1918.
• “Health Board Takes Action.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 11, 1918.
• “Influenza Claimed Twenty-One Victims Since Last Saturday.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 14, 1918.
• “Influenza Claims Four Victims.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 11, 1918.
• “Quarantine Lifted From The Normal.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 14, 1918.
• Scrapbook dating from 1918-1919. Record Group 53 Box 38. Special Collections and Archives, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pennsylvania.
• Swinger, Patricia. *Indiana Regional Medical Center 1914-2014.* Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publisher, 2014.
• “Tent Hospital Is In Prospect.” *Indiana Evening Gazette.* October 4, 1918.
• 1919 *Instano.* Special Collections and Archives, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pennsylvania.