

# **UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW**

**SPECIAL PANDEMIC ISSUE**

**R**eport  
of the Health  
Department of City  
of Wheeling, West Virginia



# UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW

A publication of the

**OHIO COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



52—16th Street  
Wheeling, WV 26003

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The **UOVHR** is generally  
published biannually.

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The publication of this edition is in partner-  
ship with Wheeling Heritage and funded in  
part by the National Park Service, U.S. Depart-  
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# UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW

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Founded by the Wheeling Area Historical Society in 1968, the **UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW** is the only publication of its kind in the northern panhandle of West Virginia. Dedicated solely to local history topics, it has become a treasured publication and valuable tool for studying and learning about our geographic area.

Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation (WNHAC, later Wheeling Heritage) continued the tradition, editing and publishing the **REVIEW** from 2010-2018.

Ownership of the **UOVHR** publication was transferred in the second half of 2018 to the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling. Articles in Vol-

ume 41, No. 1 were coordinated by then editor Rebekah Karelis, former historian for Wheeling Heritage, with the Ohio County Public Library taking on the responsibility of editing and publishing Heritage's final **REVIEW**.

This issue of the **UOVHR** is the first edition completely designed and coordinated by the Ohio County Public Library.

**UOVHR** content has historically included articles, transcribed documents, book reviews, and accounts of the economic, political, social, and cultural history of the greater Wheeling area contributed by historians and scholars. OCPL looks forward to publishing the **UOVHR** and continuing this great tradition for years to come.

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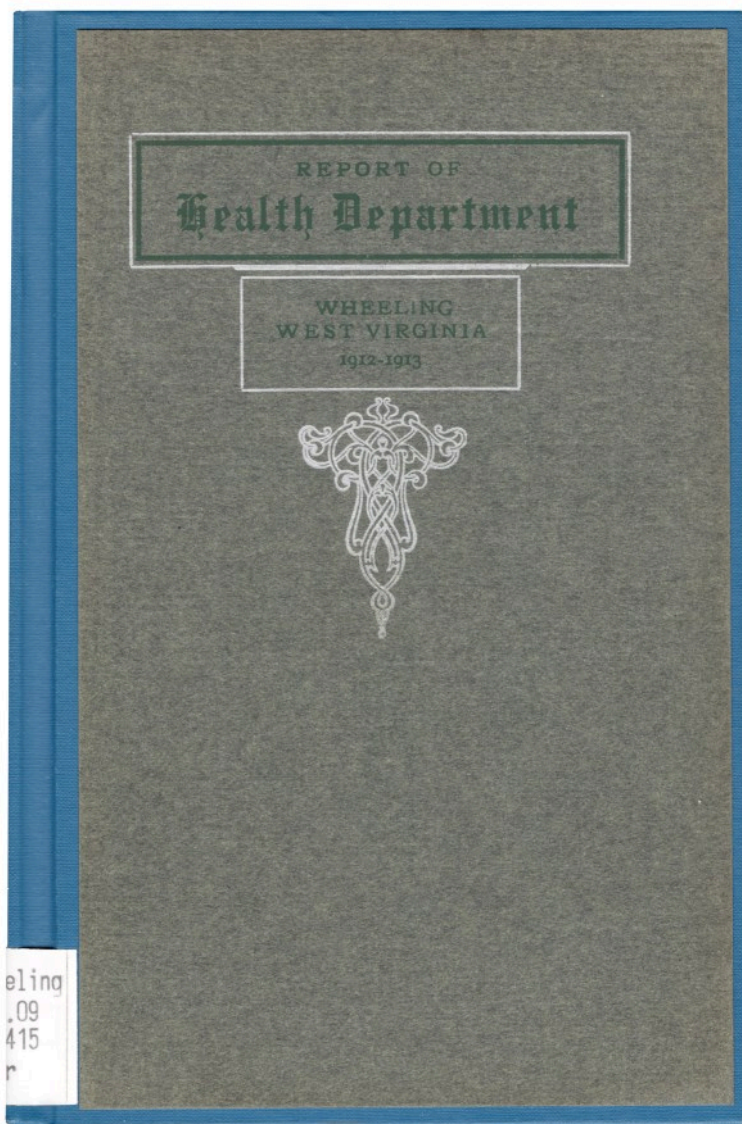
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# ON THE COVER



**IMAGES APPEARING ON THE FRONT AND BACK COVERS ARE FROM:** *"Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling, West Virginia, for the two Years ending June the thirtieth Nineteen Hundred & Thirteen"* (Wheeling: City Health Department, 1913). OCPL.

View a digital copy of this report online at [tiny.cc/WhgHealthDept1913](https://tiny.cc/WhgHealthDept1913).

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

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With this unexpected and unwanted special edition, the Ohio County Public Library officially begins its tenure as caretaker of an important regional historical legacy, the Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review. COVID-19 is affecting all of all lives. As of the printing of this issue, the Library's doors have been closed for five weeks with no plans to reopen in the foreseeable future.

While we did not foresee nor desire preempting the planned next edition that was to feature a celebration of Wheeling's history in 250 objects, we feel a special responsibility to pause to examine current events – bound themselves to be heavily scrutinized by historians of the future – through the lens of the Upper Ohio Valley's behavior, and the consequences thereof, in the face of similar crises throughout our history.

From the ravages of myriad pathogens during the frontier and Civil War eras, to the relentless scourge of tu-

berculosis, to the various cholera and typhoid outbreaks related to unsanitary conditions during our region's period of rapid industrial and population growth, to the devastating (and eerily similar to the current emergency) Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, to twentieth-century polio outbreaks, Wheeling and its neighboring communities have been forced to deal with the scourge of infectious diseases throughout time. And, of course, often in spite of ourselves, we have managed to survive.

Exploring how we have done so, both the good and the bad, informs the present and, ultimately, gives us hope. Some may question the wisdom of revisiting past miseries like those examined within these pages, but if learning from our mistakes and successes can help us now, we believe these reflections are not only wise, but also potentially life-saving.

Winston Churchill is often credited with paraphrasing philosopher George

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Santayana by saying, “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.” Churchill’s actual words were much more powerful:

*“When the situation was manageable it was neglected, and now that it is thoroughly out of hand we apply too late the remedies which then might have effected a cure. There is nothing new in the story. It is as old as the sibylline books. It falls into that long, dismal catalogue of the fruitlessness of experience and the confirmed unteachability of mankind. Want of foresight, unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong—these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history.”*

(Address to the House of Commons, May 2, 1935)

As has been said many times during the current COVID-19 pandemic, we are all in this together, as a city, a state, a region, a country, and as a species. And our unity and perseverance in the past should inspire us in the present.

**UOVHR Editor,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Seán Duffy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

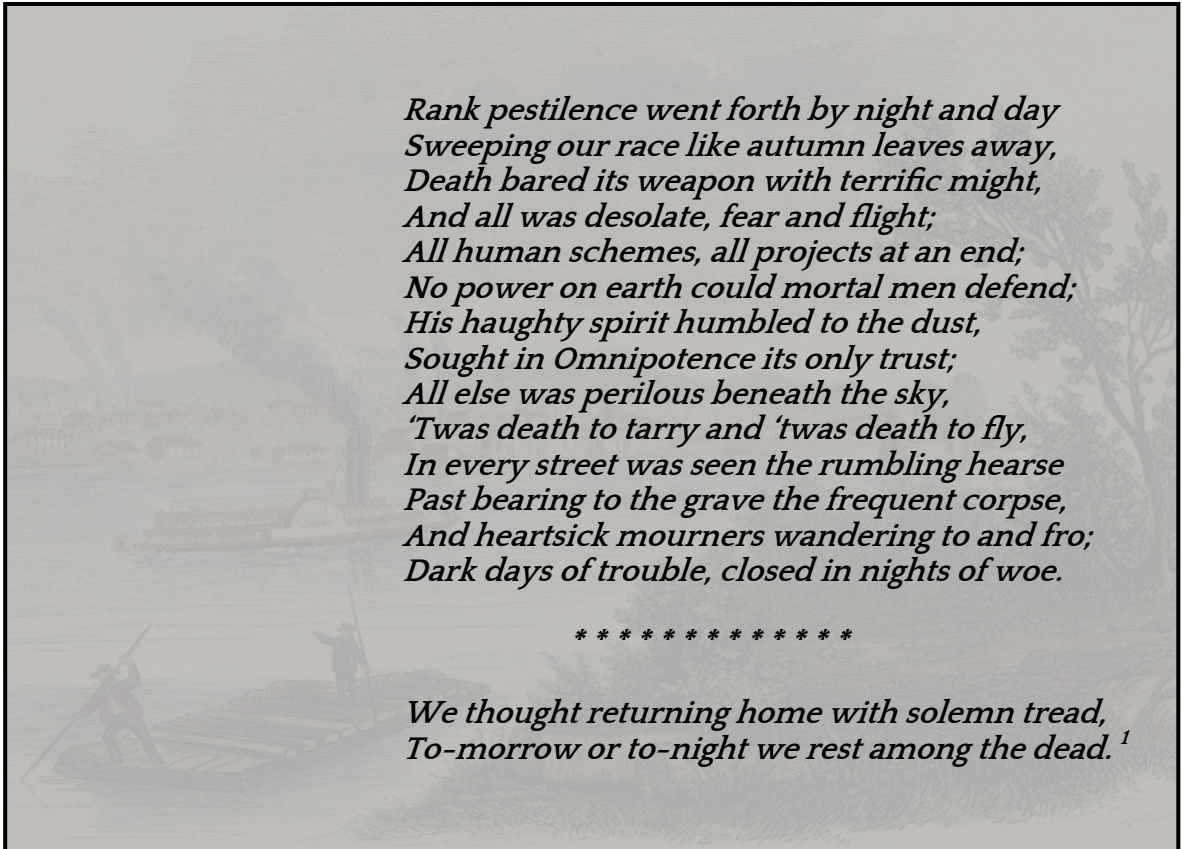
Seán Duffy

# WHEELING IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

WILLIAM HAL GORBY

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Inspired by the suffering and helplessness he witnessed during an 1833 cholera outbreak in Wheeling, Thomas J. Lees wrote a poem. Nearly sixty years later in 1892, the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* reprinted his lament during yet another cholera outbreak:



*Rank pestilence went forth by night and day  
Sweeping our race like autumn leaves away,  
Death bared its weapon with terrific might,  
And all was desolate, fear and flight;  
All human schemes, all projects at an end;  
No power on earth could mortal men defend;  
His haughty spirit humbled to the dust,  
Sought in Omnipotence its only trust;  
All else was perilous beneath the sky,  
'Twas death to tarry and 'twas death to fly,  
In every street was seen the rumbling hearse  
Past bearing to the grave the frequent corpse,  
And heartsick mourners wandering to and fro;  
Dark days of trouble, closed in nights of woe.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*We thought returning home with solemn tread,  
To-morrow or to-night we rest among the dead.<sup>1</sup>*

cilitated many social crises, in particular the spread of infectious diseases. Damp living quarters, lack of indoor plumbing, and poor garbage collection led to a very dirty and unsanitary living environment. Living in an industrializing city like Wheeling during this time could be both thrilling and disgusting, depending on where one stepped or sat down.

Life could also be scary. Death lurked around every corner, whether it be in the form of a passing streetcar or railroad locomotive one had to dodge, or an accident near the iron furnace one had to avoid. Another constant was the fear of an outbreak, whether it be tuberculosis, typhoid fever, or cholera. With industry came new forms of transportation technology, including roads, canals, and railroads. These facilitated constant movement, exasperating fears that diseases like cholera might easily travel from a port city, across states, to Wheeling. These types of social anxieties plagued urban communities from the 1830's through the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Cholera itself is spread by eating food or drinking water contaminated by the *vibrio cholera* bacterium. The disease is highly infectious and causes vomiting and diarrhea, which can lead to severe dehydration and death, sometimes within one day. During the nineteenth century, cholera spread rapidly and had a high mortality rate.

Until the installation of modern filtrated water and sewage treatment systems, the disease was a constant fear.<sup>3</sup>

This article will focus on two bad outbreaks in Wheeling—during 1832-1833 and in 1873. During the first outbreak, the disease spread quickly, but the sources we have on its effects come largely from personal reminiscences. By 1873, health professionals were beginning to understand how the disease spread, and they took a more scientific approach. Spear-headed by the City Health Department, a variety of reforms during the Progressive Era gradually began to eradicate cholera and other deadly diseases as a serious concern for Wheeling's citizens.

Reading nineteenth century Wheeling newspapers, one finds regular coverage of outbreaks elsewhere, rumors of their spread to Wheeling, and a fear the disease was brought by immigrants from afar. Paranoia readily jumps off the pages. Cholera was linked primarily to Asia, often derided as the "Asiatic Scourge" or "Asiatic Marauder." After an outbreak in New York City in 1911, doctors in Wheeling were "examining every sick person" to see if they might have the disease. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* observed about 200 immigrants had arrived in Wheeling in the months since the outbreak had started in New York.<sup>4</sup> While none showed symptoms, physicians were closely watching all who were



FRIDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1892.

PROTECTION'S "BLESSINGS"—MCKINLEY BILL—PAUPER LABOR—CHOLERA.



Editorial Cartoon, *Wheeling Daily Register*.

sick. The newspaper reminded readers that Wheeling's 1832 cholera epidemic was caused by "foreigners who migrated here from New York." Doctors speaking to the *Wheeling Register* argued that cholera epidemics in 1832, 1849, 1854, 1866, and 1873 were "due to immigration."<sup>5</sup>

During 1892, many criticized the low levels of funding for the City Health Department, founded after the Civil War, charging that the city was not ready for another mass outbreak. In fact, Wheeling had no hospital at the time for contagious diseases, where patients could be physically isolated. Others criticized years of "bad garbage collection service, foul cellars, gutters paved with cobble stones, where reeking filth lies for weeks." Druggists worried about a run on disinfectants. Many doctors recommended use of "coppers" for cleaning up "water closets, cess-pools, cellars and damp

places.” They urged pouring ten pounds into a tub of water and then pouring the mixture into water closets. Doctors also recommended the use of “chloride of lime” for cleaning plates and dishes. Another disinfectant product was carbonic acid, which cost 25 cents for a two-ounce bottle.<sup>6</sup>

## 1833

### “The Year of Death”

Wheeling’s first cholera crisis was the outbreak Thomas Lees described above in poetic verse. This “Asiatic cholera” spread thanks to the rapid growth of the city, which was home to between 5,000 and 8,000 inhabitants at the time. Advice from doctors went unheeded by city authorities, and thus there were many deaths, with a shocking mortality rate of between 50 and 60%.<sup>7</sup> Wheeling’s residents passed down stories of the 1833 epidemic for generations. While the source material lacks the scientific qualities one finds during later crises, this oral tradition offers a keen insight into the personal tragedies and everyday horrors Wheelingites faced throughout the epidemic.

Gibson Cranmer, whose father was a doctor and died from cholera, recalled how the outbreak spread up the Ohio Valley: “its approach was regarded with an unspeakable dread which

awakened the anxious fears and terrorized the hearts of the stoutest. The Angel of Death, whose fearful mission was world-wide, was abroad in the land, bearing pestilence on his wings and scattering broad-case his fatal shafts and poisoning the atmosphere.”<sup>8</sup> This almost Biblical description of the oncoming epidemic, corroborates accounts noting the panic around town as business and trade were suspended. In a nineteenth century attempt at “social distancing,” those who could, “abandoned their homes, some fleeing to the country and others to small towns.” City leaders ordered the streets cleaned, and the spreading of lime in cellars to abate the disease. Officials banned the public sale of fruits and vegetables. One of the more unusual actions, as Cranmer noted, was how “coal fires were lighted and constantly kept burning on the corners of the streets on the supposition that the Sulphur would prove an antidote to the malaria in the atmosphere.”<sup>9</sup> The Point Cotton Factory, which, in 1833, stood near the site of the Baltimore & Ohio freight depot (now WesBanco Arena), was used by the city as a make-shift hospital to treat cholera patients.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the best information on the social impact of the epidemic of 1833 came from personal reminiscences of those who survived. Interviewed with his family, Captain William Dillon “talked entertainingly on the subject”



with a *Register* reporter during the 1892 cholera scare. Dillon remembered the outbreak starting in the summer of 1832 with a number of deaths, but when “cold weather set in” the epidemic subsided until roaring back the following summer. For Dillon, the epidemic took many of the city’s most prominent citizens, most notably Noah Zane. As Dillon recalled, Alexander Hall, a well-known laborer who had just come back from New Orleans, was the first to die. Dillon also confirmed stories about “coal fires...kept burning continually all along the streets” to purify the air with Sulphur. As the crisis got worse, Dillon recalled how quickly people were “stricken down,” often “within six hours.” The level of death is hard to fathom today. As Dillon recalled: “The deaths occurred at the rate of thirty a day during several months, and I remember that on one Sunday there were sixty-four deaths...In some houses there were two and three deaths in one day.”<sup>11</sup>

Other survivors graphically remembered seeing a large number of coffins. Dillon’s wife was a young girl in 1833, living near the old Sixteenth Street Hempfield Cemetery, a site later occupied by the B&O Railroad and now the Ohio County Public Library. She recalled seeing so many “coffins accumulating” that the sexton was barely able to dig the graves fast enough with “sad funeral parties” wait-

ing for the earth to be moved for a “final resting place.”<sup>12</sup> Joseph Bell, a young teenager at the time, also had the image of coffins seared into his memory near this location: “I saw a number of coffins having corpses in them (I think 15 or 16), lying unburied on the west side of the graveyard for want of grave-diggers. This seems incredible but the frequent deaths and the great alarm prevailing at that time, keep my remembrance of the circumstance quite distinct.”<sup>13</sup>

Personal recollections also tell us something about the medical response. There were a number of popular folk cures. William Dillon personally wore a “sack filled with camphor about the neck.” Another remedy prescribed by a local physician was known as “Number 6.” It was like “liquid fire,” Mrs. Dillon recalled: “I took a dose of Number 6, and some camphor one evening and next morning I was nearer death’s door than at any time in my life.”<sup>14</sup>

Local farmer Joseph Greer was praised in the *History of the Panhandle* (1879) for his service as “the most active and efficient nurse” during the crisis. Greer recalled assisting a “very clever English doctor” named Grey around town. The doctor apparently had a simple treatment, which consisted of giving the afflicted patient “dew-berry root” and the bark of an oak tree boiled together, along with a “helpful

tablespoon” of brandy. The concoction was believed to help the stomach. If vomiting came ( a seemingly likely result), Grey would order the “liver and gizzard of a chicken to be boiled into a broth” for the patient. Notably, Greer did not use the concoction himself, preferring the hellish-sounding alternative of burning “Sulphur of brimstone” in his room. He exposed his clothes to the fumes and breathed in the Sulphur mixture to clear his lungs. These medical remedies are intriguing, particularly considering how physicians learned how the disease spread in later outbreaks.<sup>15</sup>

By June 1833, the outbreak began to subside. The *Virginia Free Press* of Charlestown reported that deaths in Wheeling declined from fourteen on June 1 to seven on June 5. By June 20, new cases had flattened, but there were still twenty-seven deaths in the prior week. On June 29, the *Wheeling Gazette* noted, with relief: “We congratulate our fellow citizens on the entire disappearance of the cholera in this place, no case having occurred for several days past.”<sup>16</sup>

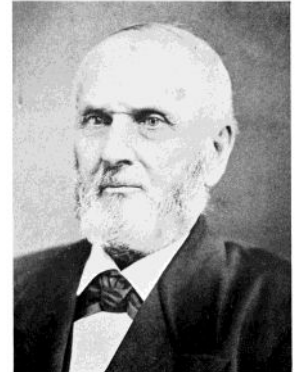
## 1873 OUTBREAK

### A Scientific Approach

Cholera made several comebacks in Wheeling after 1833. In 1854, a similar outbreak took place in the city. One

observer noted in a Morgantown newspaper, “There were 15 funerals yesterday [July 9] passing in sight of our house, making upwards of 30 on Saturday and Sunday. How it is in other parts of the city I do not know, but I learn that it is bad.” The paper would later report that the total number of cholera “internments” for Wheeling in July reached 68.<sup>17</sup>

In 1880, Wheeling physician John Frissell reported how cholera flared up on and off between 1849 and 1854. While sporadic, Dr. Frissell noted the deaths were high among laborers on the Baltimore & Ohio and the Hempfield Railroads.<sup>18</sup> Over time, doctors developed a more scientific understanding of how the disease spread. Like other doctors that followed him, Dr. Frissell argued that, “much can be done by hygiene and well regulated sanitary laws.” If people followed proper sanitizing and cleanliness techniques, he argued, the extent of outbreaks could be reduced.<sup>19</sup>



**DR. JOHN FRISSELL**

A more scientific response was evident during the cholera outbreak in the summer of 1873, when the disease ravaged large parts of the country.

Cholera hit Wheeling in two phases: from June 9 to 29, with thirteen cases and six deaths, and again from August 29 until September 25 with twenty cases and sixteen deaths (a 63% mortality rate). Public health officials asserted that cooking destroyed the germs, and urged residents to not eat raw food, to avoid drinking alcohol to excess, and to boil their utensils and plates after use. By 1873, doctors knew the bacteria was spread through discharges from an infected person's stomach and bowels. Consequently, they ordered good ventilation of homes and to avoid "foul water closets."<sup>20</sup>

The central figure during the 1873 crisis was Wheeling's city health officer, Dr. S.L. Jepson. Born in 1842 in Belmont County, Ohio, Jepson was a top graduate of Washington College in 1862, and took up medicine after training at a Cincinnati hospital. He began practicing in Wheeling in 1869, and was so successful early on that he was elected as city health officer, serving from 1873-1876 and again from 1895-1900. Jepson was also a member of city council (1880-1884) and served on the board of education (1880-

1886). He was an active researcher, publishing regularly in medical journals on the nature of infectious diseases, especially based on his work during the 1873 cholera epidemic in Wheeling.<sup>21</sup>

The 1873 outbreak was of national concern. A congressional investigation was tasked with finding "facts concerning the spread of the disease and its mode of propagation" in hopes of "limitation of future outbreaks."<sup>22</sup> Dr. Jepson testified before Congress, providing a rather detailed and scientific picture of the outbreak. For Jepson, Wheeling's topography in a floodplain was crucial, with two serious floods hitting its industrial neighborhoods in December 1872, when the city's population was around 26,000. The city's water supply came from wells, with no means for purifying or filtering the water. Lack of efficient sewers and poorly paved streets left wastewater sitting for long periods of time in alleyways and gutters, while "solid offal is generously deposited in the same public place." This deplorable situation was made much worse by the "innumerable hogs that are permitted to roam at will through the city as unpaid, and economical, sanitarians." The city had a large number of outdoor privies, with many shallow vaults often full of wastewater. The worst areas were located in the working



**DR. SAMUEL L. JEPSON**

class Fifth and Sixth Wards south of Wheeling Creek.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Jepson's narrative descriptions of those afflicted by cholera reveals much about working class life in Wheeling in the summer of 1873. The first case involved a German immigrant named Louisa Shinmacher, who lived at 2114 Main Street. Born in 1822 in Wurttemberg, she was the wife of Christian, who ran a saloon out of the dwelling, with the family living in the rear, while ten boarders rented rooms on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors. The place was unsanitary, with a privy vault in use by saloon goers, and with the rear wall of the cellar sharing a wall of the privy. A poor wall allowed the "vault to ooze through into the cellar." Louisa was suddenly seized with diarrhea on June 9, and full choleric "symptoms rapidly developed." She died on June 16.<sup>24</sup>

The next case occurred on June 20 at 3600 Chapline Street in a two-story brick tenement house where four families lived. The primary afflicted family consisted of a husband, wife, and two adult sons. The husband worked at the nearby Hobbs, Brockunier Glass House, and his sons worked at the LaBelle iron mill. The tenement house was in "bad sanitary condition," with standing water that became tainted. There was an open wooden drain to carry out wastewater which did not work well, with a privy vault nearby. A young ironworker living there got sick

first with diarrhea and vomiting on June 20. Cramps set in, then cold shivering and shriveled skin. On June 28, his sixty-year-old mother contracted cholera after nursing her son. Dr. Jepson noted neither person, both of whom recovered, had been outside of Wheeling for some time, and thus did not come in contact with anyone bringing the disease to town.<sup>25</sup>

As has been the case with COVID-19 in 2020, those worst afflicted with cholera were the elderly or those with underlying health conditions. A 48-year-old woman who kept a boarding-house at 1102 Chapline Street, was "run down in health by over-work." She also unfortunately had a "large privy-vault in the yard only 10 or 12 feet from the kitchen door." Dr. Jepson ordered this vault cleaned out in May. Two upper floor rooms near the privy "emitted a very offensive, indescribable odor. The floor had more than once been partially taken up in the expectation of finding dead rats." The night before she became sick, she ate some ice cream with a friend. On the morning of July 25, she visited a butcher shop and started complaining of feeling unwell. She started suffering from diarrhea around 7 pm, full symptoms set in by 9 am, and in a "speedy collapse" she died by 9 pm that night.<sup>26</sup>

In another similarity to current events, doctors were careful about announcing cases to the press to prevent

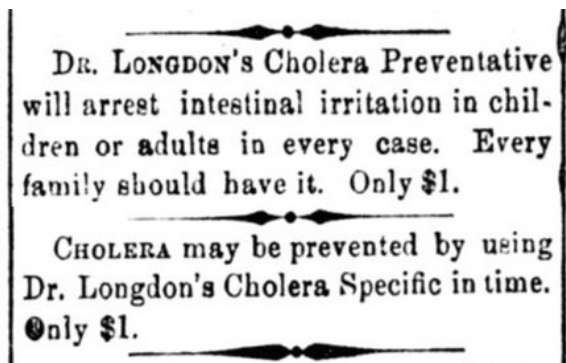
panic. The June 26 issue of the *Wheeling Daily Register*, for example, noted "If the cholera exists in Wheeling, as telegraphed over the country, it is supposed to be confined to the Western Union telegraph office. Outside of that institution no one knows of the presence of the dreaded disease."<sup>27</sup> Jepson often identified cases from "rumors heard on the streets." The press did report when Justice of the Peace William Clohan in the Sixth Ward contracted "Asiatic Cholera." While his "life hung by a single hair," he recovered. The *Wheeling Daily Register* inaccurately called this the "first case of cholera we have had in this city for years." We know from Dr. Jepson's study, this was probably the fifth case of the outbreak that year.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the lack of reports, ads for a variety of cholera treatments began popping up in the newspapers, such as one for Dr. Longdon's Cholera Preventative, which "will arrest intestinal irri-

tation in children and adults in every case. *No family should be without it. Only \$1.*"<sup>29</sup>

When the second phase of the outbreak hit, the press reported rapid deaths. John Moran of Centre Wheeling, for example, was feeling well most of Saturday August 30, but around 4 pm started feeling ill, and by 10 pm was dead. Conrad Lukehart started feeling sick at 3 am Sunday August 31, and was dead by 10 pm. Both died after just 5-7 hours of sickness. Lukehart's death was blamed on "immoderate eating and drinking" especially his consumption of "several cucumbers" and too much beer.<sup>30</sup> Popular in his working-class neighborhood, John Moran's funeral cortege was large with at least 80 carriages and buggies in the line.<sup>31</sup>

Most victims were white, but several African-Americans also died. Aaron Banks and his daughter Mary, for example, had appeared on and off in the newspapers for some years, and their lives reflected the difficulties for poor African-Americans in Wheeling. In November of 1866, both were called into police court, related to the daughter's "disorderly conduct" in their home.<sup>32</sup> Aaron Banks came down with cholera on September 3, and was dead by noon of the next day. Dr. Jepson's report noted that Banks, who was a general laborer, lived in very unsanitary surroundings in an alleyway at 10<sup>th</sup>



#### ADVERTISEMENTS,

*Wheeling Daily Register*, June 1873.

and Market Streets, with his house located against a damp high wall, preventing proper ventilation. Bank's daughter, listed in Jepson's report as a "washerwoman," (Case 31) but whom he called a "prostitute," exhibited symptoms the day after her father died. Jepson criticized both for not seeking medical treatment sooner, as the girl began having "violent cholera-symptoms" and died six hours later.<sup>33</sup>

The 1873 epidemic lasted until September 7. Of the thirty-five reported cases (twelve women and twenty-three men), twenty-two died (63%). Twenty-six out of the thirty-five (a staggering 74%) came from working class Centre and South Wheeling.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Jepson believed personal habits and underlying health conditions dictated the cases. Twelve were "intemperate" drinkers, ten of whom died, a mortality rate of 83%. The ten afflicted iron workers, after working in intense heat, "step to the coolest place they can find, and sit down" and "sometimes having cold water by the bucketful poured over their naked backs." Jepson believed this rapid temperature change contributed to their sickness.<sup>35</sup>

## PUBLIC HEALTH CHANGES

An obvious conclusion for health officials was that diseases like cholera

and typhoid fever were exacerbated by the large number of privy vaults throughout Wheeling. Indeed, many of the afflicted in 1873 lived in homes where there was waste from privy vaults entering the dwelling in some fashion.

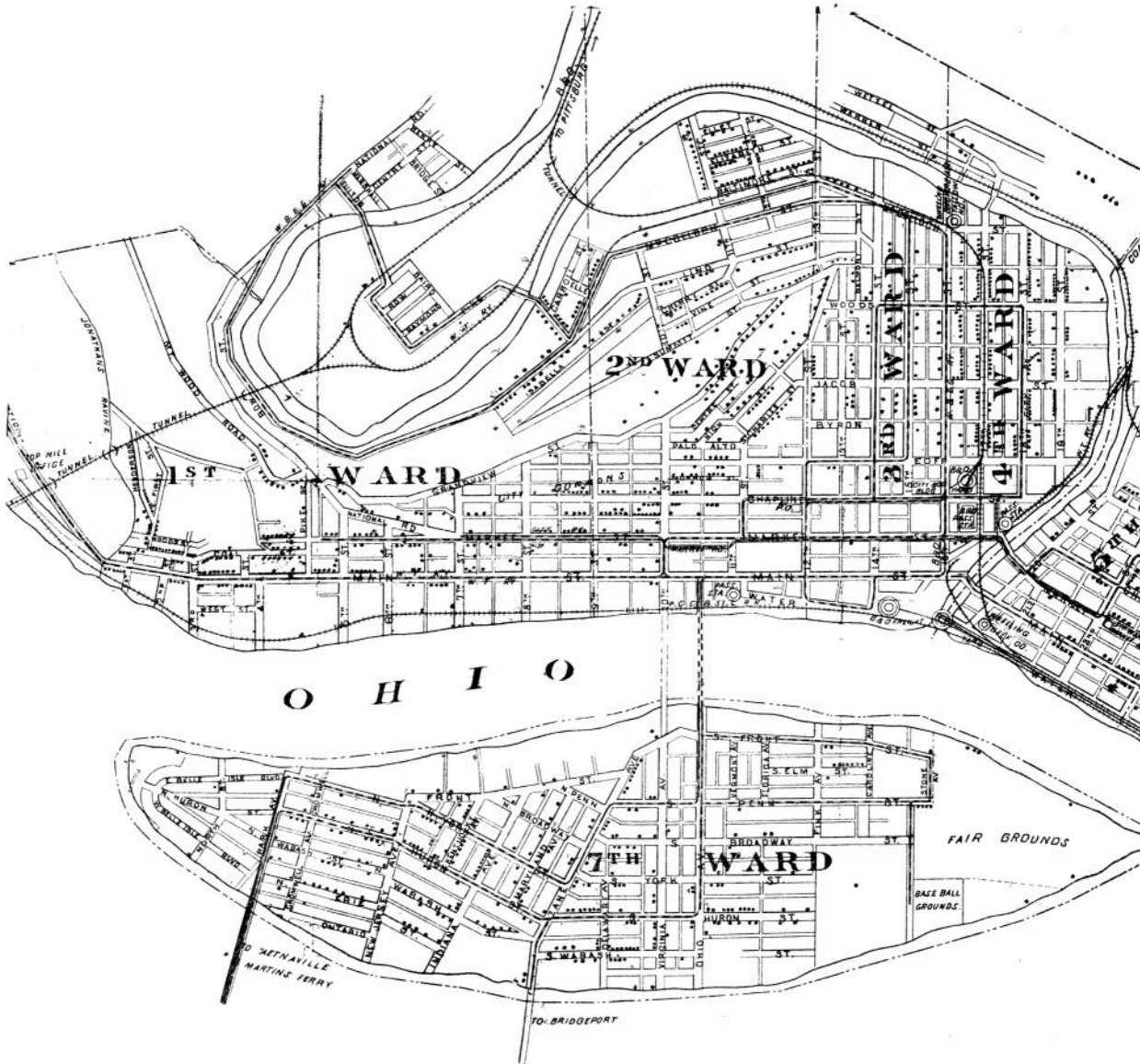
By the early twentieth century, the problem had only gotten worse. In 1913, the city health officer estimated there were 2,303 privy vaults. Unlike in 1873 when Dr. Jepson had limited resources at his disposal, the City Health Office took a scientific approach, mapping the location of privies, and developing a process of "constant supervision over them."<sup>36</sup>

Despite these improvements, working class families continued to suffer from infectious diseases. Poor garbage collection was a major part of the problem. Without a crematory, most garbage was partially burned and then thrown on the hillsides above Center and South Wheeling. Already clear-cut of trees, this polluted the soil and rain runoff even more. During the summer, the garbage would smolder and "fill the air with noxious gases." Moreover, most home structures were not fumigated after people died of small pox, scarlet fever, or consumption [tuberculosis].<sup>37</sup>

The spread of typhoid fever and cholera was a dire concern. Without indoor plumbing in most of the frame

homes and brick rows, many residents drank water directly from the river. Most utilized privies, or simply dumped human waste in backyards or street gutters. Between 1873 and 1913, 15,000 cases of typhoid fever were re-

ported, resulting in 1,583 deaths. Most working-class residents had to boil their water.<sup>38</sup> City wells tested for high levels of the deadly *coli bacillus*, and the highest contamination was found in the five city pumps near the Centre

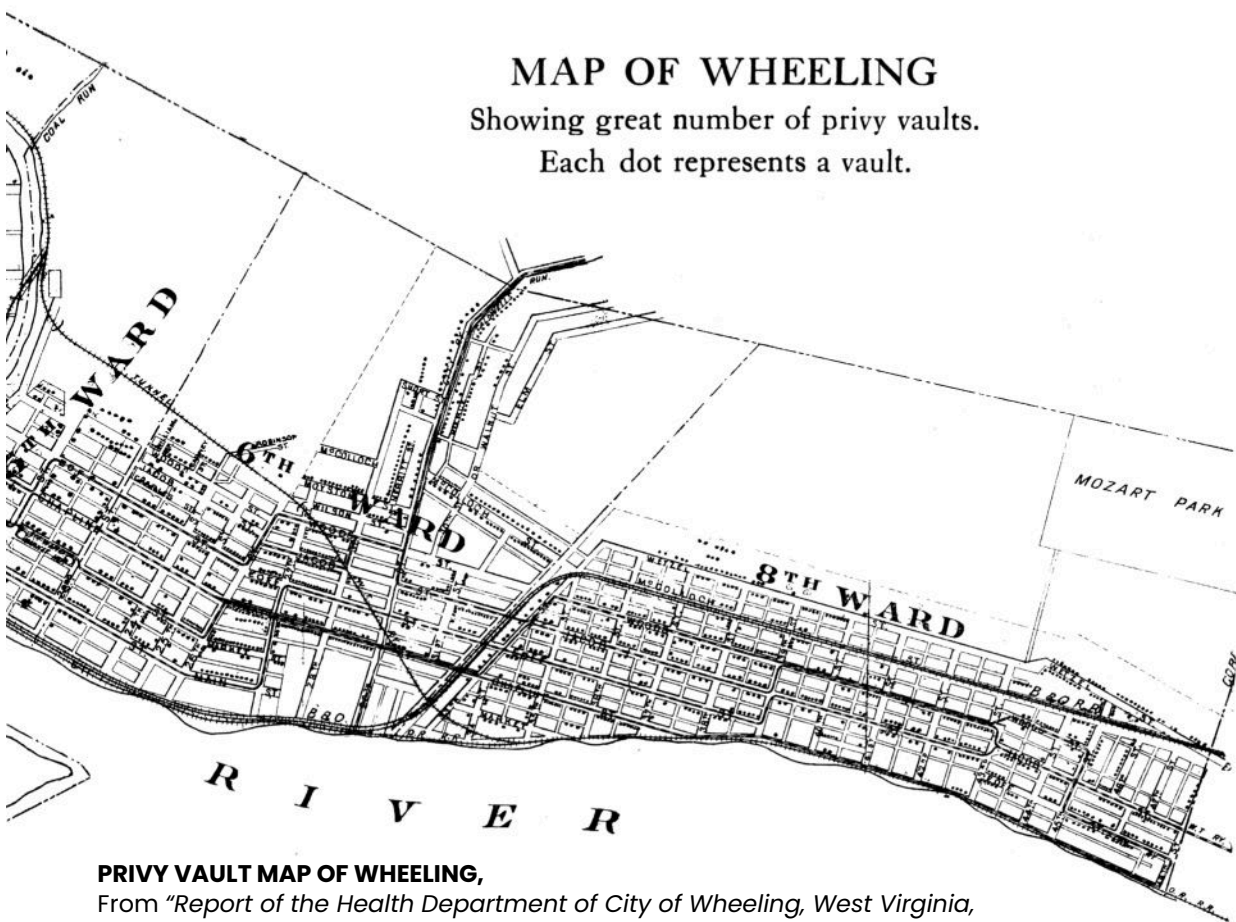




Market house. In the Fifth Ward alone, there were 135 outside privies utilized by about 1,150 people daily within a few blocks of the wells. Not surprisingly, potential contamination endangered many families.<sup>39</sup>

Eventually, reforms by the city health department and city government lowered the threat of typhoid

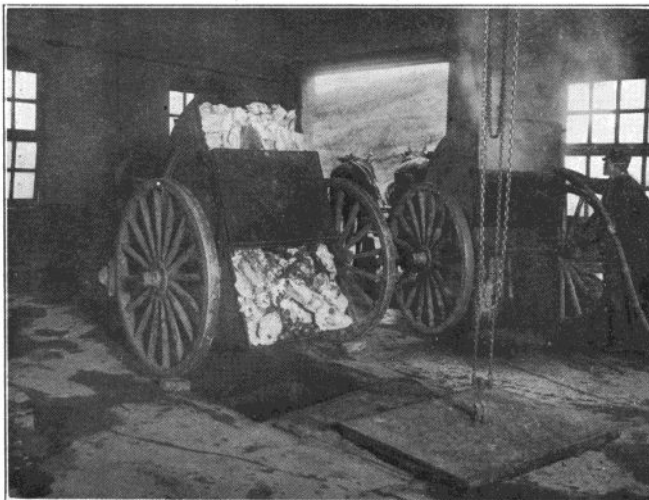
fever and cholera. Chief Health Officer Dr. W.H. McClain, working with charities and the city, began inspections for tainted milk in 1907. Within a year, the number of children's deaths dropped by 50%. Improved garbage collection proved an even greater success. Until June 1910, refuse was collected through a private contract system. After 1910, health department policy re-



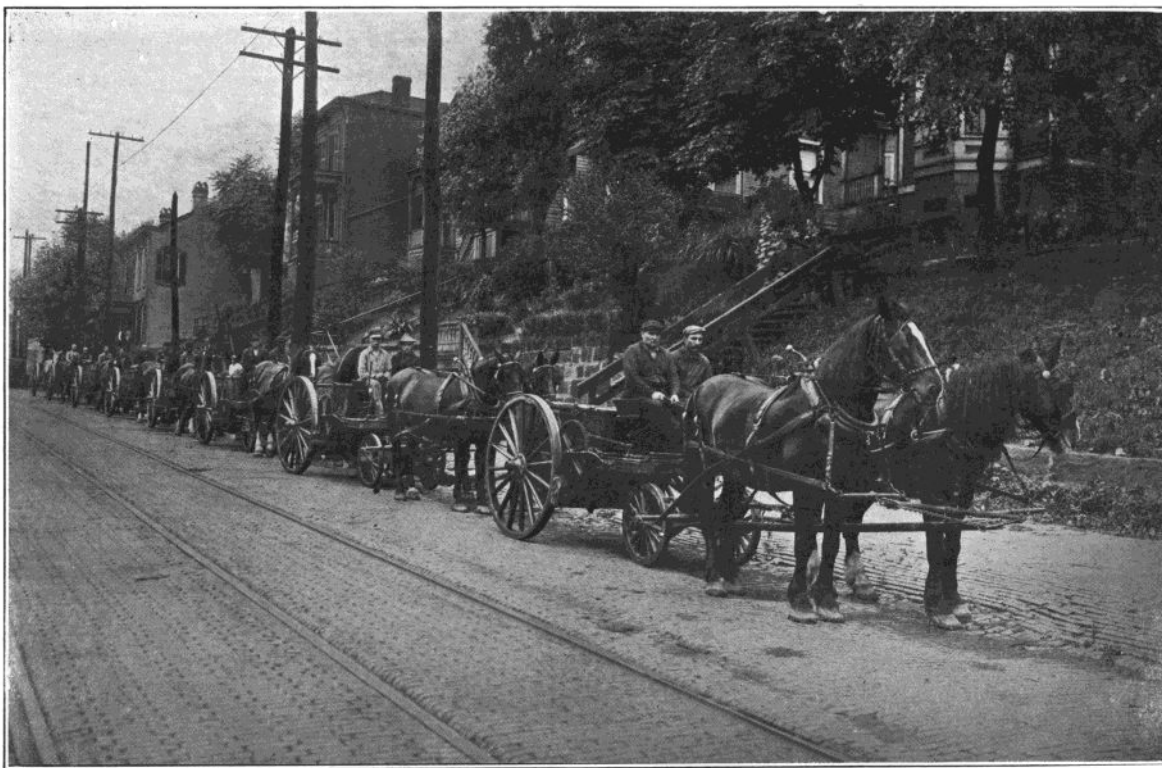
**PRIVY VAULT MAP OF WHEELING,**

From "Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling, West Virginia, for the two Years ending June the thirtieth Nineteen Hundred & Thirteen" (Wheeling: City Health Department, 1913), OCPL.

quired garbage to be drained and wrapped in paper, and city wagons went semi-weekly to all residences.<sup>40</sup> Finally, after years of debate and failed bond issues in 1915 and 1919, city residents approved a bond to build a filtrated water system in Warwood that went into operation in 1925. With water treated directly with lime and chloride and filtered through sand, Wheeling residents no longer needed to fear the dread of another cholera epidemic in the city.<sup>41</sup>



Showing Load of Paper-Wrapped Garbage, and Wagon Being Steamed.



Garbage Equipment of Wheeling

## AUTHOR BIO:

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## WHEELING IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

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1. *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, October 13, 1892, p6.
2. For more on the history of cholera outbreaks during the nineteenth century, see for London, Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006); Charles E. Rosenberg, *The New Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
3. For outbreaks in the early nineteenth century, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp 469-70, pp 472-3.

### IMAGES OPPOSITE PAGE,

From "Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling, West Virginia, for the two Years ending June the thirtieth Nineteen Hundred & Thirteen" (Wheeling: City Health Department, 1913), OCPL.

### PHOTOGRAPHS OF

**DR. JOHN FRISSELL (P. 11) &**

**DR. SAMUEL L. JEPSON (P. 12),**

From "Past presidents of the West Virginia State Medical Association, 1867-1942" (Charleston: West Virginia State Medical Association, 1942), OCPL.

# "WHEELING IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA" END NOTES

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4. *Wheeling Intelligencer*, July 20, 1911, 12; *Wheeling Register*, July 3, 1884, p4.
5. *Wheeling Register*, December 16, 1892, p4.
6. *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, September 2, 1892, 5; *Wheeling Register*, August 31, 1892, 5. See a similar fear of filthy streets and homes spreading the disease in *Wheeling Register*, April 11, 1893, p4.
7. Gibson Cranmer, *History of the Upper Ohio Valley: With Family History and Biographical Sketches, A Statement of Its Resources, Industrial Growth and Commercial Advantages, Volume 1* (Madison, Wisconsin: Brant & Fuller, 1890), 587.
8. *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, October 13, 1892, 6; Cranmer, *History of the Upper Ohio Valley*, 256.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Stories were part of a series of interviews, see "Cholera in Wheeling—The City Has Been Visited Three Times with the Dreaded Disease," *Wheeling Sunday Register*, September 4, 1892, 5; *History of the Panhandle: Historical Collections of the Counties of Ohio, Brooke, Marshall and Hancock, West Virginia*, edited by J.H. Newton (Wheeling, W.Va.: J.A. Caldwell, 1879), 250, 192; Joseph Bell, "Reminiscences of His Schoolboy Days: An Octogenarian Tells of Places, Conditions, and Events in Early Wheeling, 1905," edited by Dennis E. Lawther, *Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review* 9, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 1980): p18.
12. "Cholera in Wheeling," *Wheeling Sunday Register*, September 4, 1892, p5.
13. Bell, "Reminiscences of His Schoolboy Days," p15.
14. "Cholera in Wheeling," *Wheeling Sunday Register*, September 4, 1892, p5.
15. *History of the Panhandle*, p 250, p 271.
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17. *Monongalia (Morgantown) Mirror*, July 15, 1854, 2; August 12, 1854, p2.
18. *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, November 26, 1880, p3.
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24. 24. Louisa Shinmacher, June 16, 1873, Register of Deaths in 1<sup>st</sup> District, Ohio County,

- West Virginia, 1873, reproduced by West Virginia State Archives Vital Records, [25. Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the "Cholera Epidemic of 1873 at Wheeling, W.Va.," p421.

26. Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the "Cholera Epidemic of 1873 at Wheeling, W.Va.," pp422-4.

27. \*Wheeling Daily Register\*, June 26, 1873, 2, 4; Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the "Cholera Epidemic of 1873 at Wheeling, W.Va.," p432.

28. \*Wheeling Daily Register\*, July 7, 1873, 4; Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the "Cholera Epidemic of 1873 at Wheeling, W.Va.," p429.

29. \*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer\*, June 24, 1873, p4.

30. \*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer\*, September 1, 1873, p4.

31. \*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer\*, September 2, 1873, p4.

32. \*Wheeling Daily Register\*, November 5, 1866, p3.

33. \*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer\*, September 5, 1873, 5; Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the "Cholera Epidemic of 1873 at Wheeling, W.Va.," 426, 429; Aaron Banks, 1870 Manuscript Census, Wheeling Ward 2, Ohio County, West Virginia, 1870 United States Federal Census, reproduced via Ancestry.com; \*Wheeling Daily Register\*, September 9, 1873, p4.

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35. Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the "Cholera Epidemic of 1873 at Wheeling, W.Va.," pp431-2.

36. \*Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling\*, 1913, OCPL, p30.

37. \*Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling\*, 1913, 12-3, 16-7; \*Wheeling Register\*, July 1, 1912, 5; \*Wheeling Daily News\*, January 7, 1907, p4.

38. \*Wheeling Daily News\*, January 7, 1908, 1; \*Wheeling Intelligencer\*, August 5, 1909, 12; \*Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling\*, 1913, OCPL, pp16-7.

39. \*Wheeling Register\*, August 30, 1914, 12; \*Wheeling Daily News\*, January 6, 1907, Section 4, p8.

40. \*Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling\*, 1913, OCPL, pp32-5.

41. Tom Dunham, \*Wheeling in the twentieth Century\* \(Bloomington, IN: 1<sup>st</sup> Books Library, 2003\), pp35-6.](http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_view.aspx?Id=5614086&Type=Death;Louisia%20Shumaker,1870%20Manuscript%20Census,Wheeling%20Ward%205,Ohio%20County,West%20Virginia,1870%20United%20States%20Federal%20Census, reproduced via Ancestry.com (7 April 2020); Dr. S.L. Jepson, testimony on the )

# UNSELFISH ZEAL

## WHEELING'S 1864 SANITARY FAIR

JON-ERIK GILOT

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By the spring of 1864 Wheeling residents must have looked around and marveled at the changes that had taken place in their city in three short years. Martial law had usurped *habeas corpus*, landing many Wheeling citizens in confinement without recourse. Since 1861, Wheeling had been continuously occupied by Federal troops from Camp Carlile, the military installation on Wheeling Island, while thousands more had passed through the city to points east and west. The city had transitioned from one of the largest in Virginia, a state loyal to Jefferson Davis and the Southern Confederacy, to the largest city and capital of the new state of West Virginia, loyal to Abraham Lincoln and the Union.

More than these changes, it was the proverbial “empty chair” that altered the Wheeling landscape. While the battlefield would take dozens of Wheeling men throughout the war, it was disease that claimed more. Company A of the West Virginia Independent Exempts – a company of troops recruited for special service within the

city of Wheeling – would lose five men to disease without ever leaving the city. Nearly 50% of the company would spend some amount of their service under a physician’s care, many of them discharged from service due to disability. Troops stationed in Wheeling, confined in the Athenaeum prison or simply passing through the city overwhelmed the Sprigg House Hospital and Wheeling Hospital.

According to one study, 3/5 of Union casualties – an astounding 63% – were lost to disease.<sup>1</sup> While these numbers can be attributed to many factors – poor sanitation, contaminated food and water, a lack of understanding of germs and bacteria – the medical arm of the Union military was simply unprepared for the scope of the war that was soon thrust upon them, counting only 98 physicians in its ranks at the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

Following the bloodletting at the First Battle of Bull Run, several relief organizations were organized to assist

with the obvious shortfall in providing for the needs of Federal soldiers, chief among them the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), which established and staffed hospitals and rest homes and provided soldiers with food, medical supplies and transportation. Funded chiefly by state taxes, the USSC relied heavily on donations and local support. Additional organizations, such as the United States Christian Commission and local aid societies, likewise supported soldiers with medical aid and necessities.

Like other cities losing men to combat and disease, Wheeling residents rallied to provide for their troops. Several local relief organizations were established in 1861, with a more formal organization of the Soldiers Aid Society in July 1862, their stated purpose to “*minister to the sick, care for the suffering, and comfort the afflicted.*”<sup>3</sup> By January 1864, the group had collected more than \$6,000 from local donations.<sup>4</sup> The USSC would arrive in Wheeling the following year, establishing a depot to accept donations and assigning agents to lecture at the House of Delegates and at several local churches.

As a means of generating both donations for the USSC and enthusiasm for the war effort, cities in 1863 began organizing Sanitary Fairs. Often involving music, performances and exhibition halls with lavish historical, me-

chanical and patriotic displays, cities vied to “out raise” other cities’ donation totals. At least 30 Sanitary Fairs sanctioned by the USSC were held in various northern cities between February 1863 and July 1865.<sup>5</sup> Not to be outdone by other cities’ patriotic and philanthropic devotion, Wheeling determined to host a Sanitary Fair of its own.

*The Grand Patriotic Festival*, more commonly called the *Wheeling Sanitary Fair*, was announced to the public on June 9, 1864 and was slated to be held at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad depot less than two weeks later on June 21. Organized “*for the benefit of the soldiers,*” on behalf of the USSC, the U.S. Christian Commission and the

**GRAND PATRIOTIC  
FESTIVAL  
AND FAIR,**  
ON BEHALF OF THE  
**SANITARY COMMISSION,**  
THE  
**CHRISTIAN COMMISSION,**  
AND  
**SOLDIERS' AID SOCIETIES.**  
TO BE HELD IN THE  
**FAIR BUILDINGS,**  
COMMENCING JUNE 28th, 1864,  
And continuing for one week, including a **GRAND  
CELEBRATION** on the Fourth of July.

AD, *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, June 1864.



Soldiers Aid Society, the fair was arranged by a committee chaired by Wheeling Mayor Henry Crangle and composed of the city's leading businessmen, including John Hubbard and Thomas Hornbrook.<sup>6</sup> Promising *"the most rational enjoyments that can be available,"* organizers planned an illumination, a floral hall, amusements, music and entertainment.<sup>7</sup> Committee assignments included, among others, Finance, Floral, Fancy Articles, and Curiosities & Fine Arts, which sought for donation or exhibition curiosities, oddities, and antiques of local and national significance. Agents were assigned to promote the fair in more than thirty cities and villages as far as Clarksburg.

By June 13 it was reported more than \$1,200 in proceeds had been raised. Two days later, the amount had more than doubled, with employees of LaBelle Ironworks contributing more than \$400.00 in donations. Interest

was so great and the scope expanded to such an extent as to force the delay of the opening by one week, the new date set as June 28.<sup>8</sup> Planning would outgrow the B&O depot, forcing the fair to relocate to the Commissary Storeroom, located at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> & John streets (16<sup>th</sup> & Chapline). Laborers were hired to construct additional buildings on the site to house all of the planned exhibitions. Water lines and more than 1,200 gas lights were run through the temporary complex.

Four local railroads (B&O, Cleveland & Pittsburgh, Central Ohio, & Hempfield) as well as seven steamboats all advertised special excursion rates to carry attendees to and from the fair. Donations poured in, including a piano, valued at \$500.00, sent by a Baltimore firm, as well as a rosewood cabinet-case sewing machine valued at \$150.00, and a horse and buggy, among other items. A dress sword, now on display at West Virginia Inde-



**BENJAMIN F. KELLEY DRESS SWORD, ON EXHIBIT IN WEST VIRGINIA INDEPENDENCE HALL .**

Photos above and opposite courtesy Deborah J. Jones, WVIH Site Manager.

pendence Hall, was displayed at the fair to be given to the general – Benjamin F. Kelley or Franz Sigel – who received the most votes, cast for \$1.00 from fair attendees. By the opening of the fair more than \$8,000 had been raised.

Slated to run for one week, the fair opened on Tuesday evening, June 28<sup>th</sup>. Entrance fees to the various halls ranged from 15 to 50 cents, with children under 12 years of age admitted for 10 cents. Opening ceremonies included fireworks, brass bands, and Governor Arthur Boreman delivering the inaugural address. Boreman would remark *"How shall we act? Shall we think of compromise or a withdrawal of*

*the army? Shall we, after so much loss of life and money, throw down our arms and recognize the Rebels? No! God forbid it! The Rebels are arrayed against us with powerful armies, but we must put them down. We must not give up. We have the men and the money, and unborn generations call for us to cling to and protect the Government and regard the rights of the people."*<sup>9</sup>

Forty ladies booths lined the Bazaar Hall, which featured a Swiss cottage dispensing cheese and milk. Attendees could find for purchase *"boots, shoes, liquors, cutlery, pyramid cakes, saddlery, clothing, furniture, soap, iron, nails, wool, toy horses, cradles, socks, and useful items of all*



**INSCRIPTION ON BENJAMIN F. KELLEY DRESS SWORD, WEST VIRGINIA INDEPENDENCE HALL .**

*description.*" <sup>10</sup> The Manufacturers Hall featured glass blowers, a printing press, a nail machine and other mechanics. The Floral Hall showcased a French garden scene, fountains, and a fortune teller's booth. A gas "liberty tree" manufactured in New York was erected in the Concert Hall. Edibles of every kind could be found in the Dining Hall.

Across the street from the fair buildings, in Monitor Hall, visitors

could marvel at the miniature *USS Monitor*, the first ironclad warship commissioned by the Federal Navy. Secured from the recent Pittsburgh Sanitary Fair, prisoners at the Athenaeum had been put to work digging a canal on which the 1/24 scale *Monitor* would float. Visitors in the Manufacturers Hall could find an actual iron plate used in the construction of naval ironclads. The Monitor Hall also featured a shooting gallery and a saloon.



**THE MINIATURE OF THE USS MONITOR AT THE PITTSBURGH SANITARY FAIR, JUNE 4, 1864.**

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported June 6, 1864, "The Monitor feature where they have iron clad fights and exhibitions of the model of Union guns, attracted universal attention."

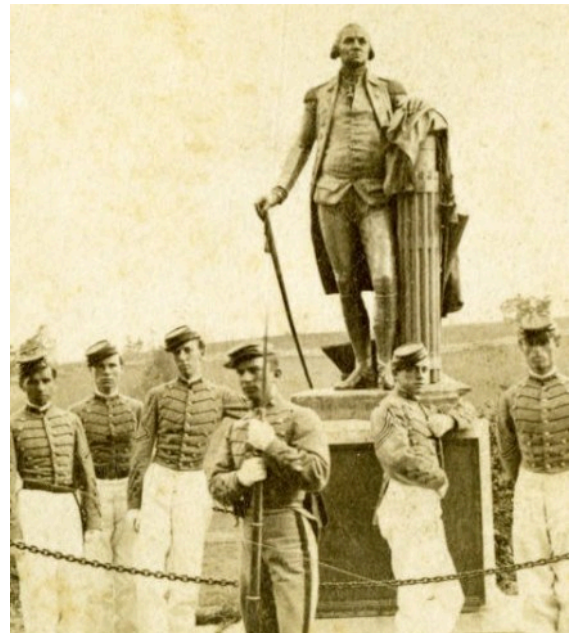
Photograph courtesy the U.S. Naval Historical Center.





The Gallery of Curiosities & Fine Arts exhibited portraits, rare books, a piano owned by George Washington, and the wooden leg of Mexican General Santa Anna, as well as oddities including a double-headed calf, a six-legged sheep, albino rats, and more. Also displayed were local artifacts, including a cross-saw used in the construction of Fort Henry.

The curiosity generating the most attention was a statue of George Washington that had recently been “liberated” from the campus of the Virginia Military Institute.<sup>11</sup> The bronze statue, which had adorned the parade ground at VMI, had escaped the destruction of the campus by General David Hunter on June 12 and was shipped to Wheeling, where visitors



**CEREMONY REDEDICATING THE GEORGE WASHINGTON STATUE AT VMI, 1866.**

Photograph courtesy VMI Archives.

were encouraged to “*avail themselves of this opportunity to see him [Washington] as he appeared in the height of his glory and usefulness.*”<sup>12</sup> Following the fair, the statue would be placed in the yard of the statehouse building (now the “First State Capitol” on Eoff Street), where it remained until June 1866 when it was presented back to VMI, an olive branch from West Virginia to her mother state. The statue remains on display at VMI today.

Visitors could also see relics and tree trunks salvaged from battlefields east and west. A Confederate trading boat, captured on the Rappahannock River by the 7<sup>th</sup> West Virginia, was displayed. Canes fashioned from trees from the battlefields of Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Lookout Mountain were available for purchase.

Nightly entertainment included balls, musical, and theatrical performances. On July 4, the Metropolitan Circus opened adjoining the fair, promising half of the proceeds to the fair’s benefit. Fair attendance was so brisk, it was decided to extend the festivities through July 9.

As festivities began to wrap up on July 8, Federal prisoners from the neighboring Athenaeum prison were invited to the Dining Hall where they enjoyed dinner, though it was reported that perhaps one half of the prisoners

“*carried the most painful and degrading of all badges, a ball and chain, and were closely guarded.*”<sup>13</sup> The fair was also visited by soldiers of the 4<sup>th</sup> West Virginia, recently mustered out of service.

The fair closed on Saturday, July 9. Voting on the handsome dress sword favored General Kelley, while voting for a sword to be presented to the city’s “favorite” Colonel favored Colonel Isaac Duval of Wellsburg. All remaining unsold or unclaimed goods were auctioned on July 11, and the buildings were deconstructed. No vestiges of the Sanitary Fair remain, the site now home to First English Lutheran Church and the Frontier Communications Building.

On July 21 it was reported that receipts from Wheeling’s Sanitary Fair had totaled \$34,791.77 (more than half a million in 2020 dollars), with expenses not expected to exceed \$14,000.<sup>14</sup> Monies were turned over to J.B. Ford, B&O general agent at Wheeling and local agent for the Sanitary Fair.<sup>15</sup> These funds would represent the Wheeling community’s devotion to the Union war effort, the *Belmont Chronicle* praising the “*unselfish zeal with which the Union people of Wheeling prosecuted*” the fair. To that end, the funds would help sustain USSC operations for the remainder of the war to the benefit of countless Union soldiers.

## AUTHOR BIO:

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## UNSELFISH ZEAL WHEELING'S 1864 SANITARY FAIR

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# DENT VS. STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

## HOW WHEELING CHANGED THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

DR. WILLIAM NEAL

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In the early days of this country few practitioners of the healing arts were graduates of medical schools. Those who were formally trained often opened their homes to aspiring young apprentices who were there to observe and perhaps assist with minor procedures. Importantly, they had access to their mentor's medical library, which opened their eyes to the broad vistas of the profession as taught in Europe's most prestigious universities, especially in London and Edinburgh. As the pool of formally educated physicians expanded, it became apparent that America must have its own schools to serve the colonies. Dr. John Morgan, himself a product of this system, delivered the commencement address at the College of Philadelphia in 1765, in which he advocated the establishment of a medical school that would become the University of Pennsylvania.

Medical institutions progressively mushroomed, some affiliated with established colleges in the east such as Harvard, and many more as free standing proprietary enterprises. In 1830, Dr. John Cook Bennett sought to establish Wheeling University as a medical school, but it was turned down by the Virginia Assembly. Bennett subsequently moved to Indiana and succeeded in creating a profitable "diploma mill." Even as more than four-hundred medical schools opened and closed during the nineteenth century, Harvard President Dr. Charles Eliot spoke of the poor state of American medicine in 1874, observing, "the standard of medical education is deplorably low."

It was against this backdrop that the new State of West Virginia, and its first capital city of Wheeling in particular, were to have profound influence



on the regulation and licensing of the practice of medicine throughout the United States.

Born in Philippi, the son of a Methodist minister, James Reeves and his younger sister, Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis, were raised with high social values. While she was to become the inspiration for the national holiday, Mother's Day, James attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his M.D. degree in 1860. Dr. Reeves made a name for himself fighting the scourge of Typhoid fever in Philippi before moving to Wheeling in 1868. He believed with near religious conviction in the supremacy of formalized medical education. In 1867, he convened a group of like-minded physicians, one of whom was a fellow Wheeling physician, Dr. George Baird, to establish the Medical Society of West



**DR. JAMES REEVES**



**DR. GEORGE BAIRD**

Virginia (MSWV). Though he had been one of the leading secessionists during the Civil War, Baird was the most politically connected physician in the State.

A top priority of the new Medical Society was establishment of a State Board of Medicine, which was enacted by the Legislature in 1881. It was empowered to grant licensure on the basis of graduation from a "legitimate" medical school, followed by passage of an examination.

Enter Dr. Frank Dent. The Dent family was widely known for its legacy of physicians practicing in north central West Virginia around Morgantown and Grafton. Frank apprenticed under his father, William, who had delivered an address before the MSWV that opposed the hard line taken by Reeves and Baird, arguing that many of the medicines used by 'scientific' practice may do more harm than good, and that most ailments were self-limiting. Not surprisingly, young Frank Dent was denied a license but continued to practice medicine anyway. Convicted of practicing without a license in the circuit court of Preston County, he appealed to the West Virginia Supreme Court, where he was represented by his uncle Marmaduke Dent, a distinguished jurist and the first graduate of West Virginia University. The state court ruled against Dent, holding that states could set reasonable require-

ments to obtain a medical licensure. The decision was subsequently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dent vs. West Virginia*, 129 U.S. 114 (1889), effectively transforming the practice of medicine in this country. A week after the *Dent* decision, the *AMA Medical News* declared "States May Regulate Medical Practice." By 1900, all states had licensure laws.

Passage of the bill to tightly regulate licensure to practice medicine caused bitter conflict among West Virginia doctors. On the morning of March 7, 1891, Dr. George Garrison shot and killed Dr. George Baird in downtown Wheeling. Both men were well-regarded medical practitioners, but Garrison resented Baird's disapproval and unrelenting belittling of his qualifications as a physician.



**DR. GEORGE GARRISON**

*Photograph courtesy Christine McDermott.*

## THE TORTUOUS PATH TO EDUCATING DOCTORS IN WEST VIRGINIA

Ironically, it would be another three-quarters of a century before the State of West Virginia would be able to graduate and license its own medical practitioners. The path to conferring the first M.D. degree by West Virginia University in 1962 was immensely challenging. Typical of the chaos of the times, the University Board of Regents



**DR. FRANK DENT WITH WIFE, IDA LATIMER (FRAZIER) DENT, AND CHILDREN.**

*Photograph courtesy Clarke E. Ross.*

created a “College of Medicine” in 1900, only to rescind the designation a year later. In 1912, the regents designated a two-year School of Medicine as a distinct entity within the University, requiring students to transfer to four-year institutions to complete clinical training required for an M.D. degree.

The Great Depression negatively impacted the School of Medicine, threatening its accreditation by the AMA. Fortunately, Edward J. Van Liere, M.D., PhD, a Harvard graduate who had joined the WVU faculty in 1921, was appointed Dean of the Medical School during the accreditation crisis. Van Liere’s field of expertise was in the emerging field of high-altitude physiology, for which he was internationally known. Respect for his academic stature, and superb administrative skill as a new Dean, preserved not only WVU’s status as a two-year school of medicine, but nine other similar institutions around the country. As it became clear that the AMA wanted to end the recognition of two-



**DR. EDWARD VAN LEIRE**

*Photograph courtesy  
West Virginia  
University  
School of Medicine.*

year medical schools, WVU and other two-year programs knew their days were numbered.

World War II delayed definitive action, but in 1951, with Governor Okey Patteson’s support, West Virginia found a way to build a comprehensive Medical Center in Morgantown with the parent University. Completed in 1960, the Medical Center, which included a Basic Science Building and Teaching Hospital, was the culmination of decades of aspiration, frustration, planning, and execution, an awe-inspiring and commanding institution conveying “order, stability, dignity, and grace.”

## LEADERSHIP

For his tireless efforts, Dr. Van Liere is rightfully considered the father of WVU Medicine. Perhaps his marriage very early in his career to Helen Kimmins of Elm Grove “wedded” him to West Virginia despite its challenges. His legacy lives on through the success of his students, one of whom was Clarksburg, WV native Jay Arena, founder of the Department of Pediatrics at Duke University. Dr. Arena spoke for many when he wrote of Van Liere, “Your influence on so many students and your contributions to medicine in the state and nation can never be adequately reported.”

Over half a century has passed since Van Liere's retirement. The many challenges along the way have given rise to what is today referred to as "WVU Medicine," a health care delivery system consisting of fourteen hospitals, nationally competitive institutes, and numerous clinics in every corner of the state and region.

Current Dean and Executive Vice-

president for WVU Health Sciences, Dr. Clay Marsh, having been appointed by Governor Jim Justice as state 'Czar' of the effort to combat the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic in West Virginia, now represents West Virginia's leadership on the national stage, begun over a century ago with Wheeling physicians Reeves and Baird and the landmark case of *Dent vs. State of West Virginia*.

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### DENT vs. WEST VIRGINIA.

"The statute of West Virginia which requires every practitioner of medicine in the State to obtain a certificate from the State Board of Health that he is a graduate of a reputable medical college in the school of medicine to which he belongs; or that he has practised medicine in the State continuously for ten years prior to March 8, 1881; or that he has been found, upon examination, to be qualified to practise medicine in all its departments, and which subjects a person practising without such certificate to prosecution and punishment for a misdemeanor, does not, when enforced against a person who had been a practising physician in the State for a period of five years before 1881, without a diploma of a reputable medical college in the school of medicine to which he belonged, deprive him of his estate or interest in the profession without the process of law.

"The State, in the exercise of its power to provide for the general welfare of its people, may exact from parties before they can practice medicine a degree of skill and learning in that profession upon which the community employing their services may confidently rely; and, to ascertain whether they have such qualifications, require them to obtain a certificate from a Board or other authority competent to judge in that respect. If the qualifications required are appropriate to the profession, and attainable by reasonable study or application, their validity is not subject to objection because of their stringency or difficulty."

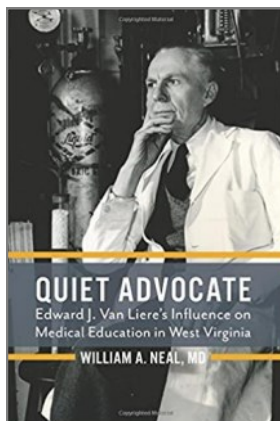
## AUTHOR BIO:

William A. Neal, M.D. is a native of Huntington, WV. He earned his M.D. degree from WVU in 1966, where he was the first recipient of the Edward J. Van Liere Award for medical student research. As a flight surgeon, he made two deployments to Vietnam, then returned to WVU, was named chair of the Dept. of Pediatrics, and served as the first medical director of WVU Children's Hospital. Named Distinguished Alumnus of the WVU School of Medicine in 2006, Neal retired to emeritus status in 2014.

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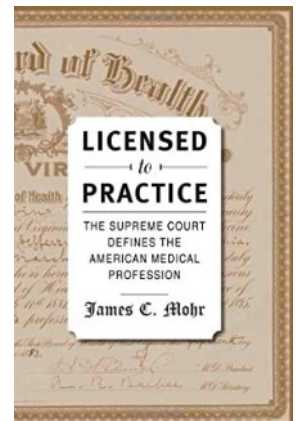
## RECOMMENDED READING:

Dr. Neal is the author of *Quiet Advocate: Edward J. Van Liere's Influence on Medical Education in West Virginia*. West Virginia & Regional History Center, WVU Libraries. 2017.



*Licensed to Practice: the Supreme Court Defines the American Medical Profession.*

James C. Mohr.  
Johns Hopkins  
University Press.  
2013.



# 800 GRAVES

## THE TUBERCULOSIS SANITARIUM AT RONEY'S POINT

RYAN STANTON

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The history of Roney's Point plays an integral role in the history of Ohio County. What started out as a stopping place and stone tavern along the National Road also has an interesting connection to one of Wheeling's great entrepreneurs and business leaders, Henry Schmulbach. Even later, the site gained notoriety as the county poor farm, a tuberculosis sanitarium, and a home for the mentally ill.

Various poor farms and sanitariums were located throughout Ohio County prior to one being constructed at Roney's Point in 1936. One of the first was located in Elm Grove at the current site of Bridge Street Middle School. When tuberculosis (TB), colloquially known as "consumption" (due to the weight loss in its victims) or "white plague" (due to the paleness of said victims), became a big problem in the Wheeling region, there was much talk of constructing a sanitarium in Ohio County and treating patients for that sole purpose.

According to the CDC, tuberculosis is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which was discovered in 1882 by Dr. Robert Koch. Prior to Koch's discovery, TB was had been an extremely lethal disease throughout human history, killing one in seven people who had ever lived. A highly contagious disease, industrialization facilitated its spread, so that by the nineteenth century, Wheeling was among those American manufacturing hubs with rampant overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, where TB flourished, leading to innumerable outbreaks.

And infection often had horrific consequences. Again, according to the CDC, "The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain..." Symptoms include a hacking, bloody cough, excruciating lung pain, and fatigue.

The most popular nineteenth cen-

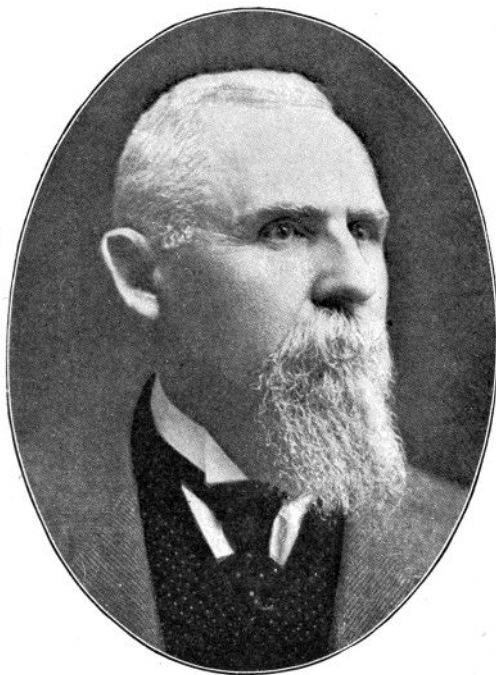
tury treatment involved the use of sanitariums, usually located in rural areas, where patients could be quarantined from society in a more healthful, i.e. non-urban setting, while also being able to rest and recover.

For a short time, there was a TB sanitarium located at View Point near the top of Stone Church Road. The View Point sanitarium was used until 1918, when it closed due to criticisms about its lack of water supply and poor road conditions. In 1921, the property at View Point was sold to Fred Folmar, a local show dealer. During this era, property intended for use as a TB sanitarium was also acquired on Battle Run Road, and buildings were constructed. Though never used for TB, this location would later be employed as a “fresh air farm” for children.

In 1913, Henry Schmulbach, a well-known Wheeling brewer, businessman, and entrepreneur, purchased property near Roney’s Point, just east of Triadelphia. There he would construct one of the most elaborate estates in Ohio County. Schmulbach originally planned to build the mansion for his sisters Mary and Elizabeth, but both had died prior to 1912. Plagued by loneliness in his twenty-plus room mansion, Schmulbach (age 68) married Eva Pauline Bertschy (age 47), who served as the hostess of the majestic Roney’s Point estate, or so the story goes.

The white brick colossus featured awnings over the front porch to keep out the summer heat, a second story sun porch, and a carriage turnaround behind the house. The home was surrounded by gardens, terraces, walkways, fountains, and a professional grade greenhouse, where Schmulbach grew exotic plants and flowers. The estate also featured stables, a long barn, and a gatehouse at the bottom of the long driveway leading to the property.

Henry Schmulbach would reside at his mansion for only two years. In the early summer of 1915, just one year after



HENRY SCHMULBACH.

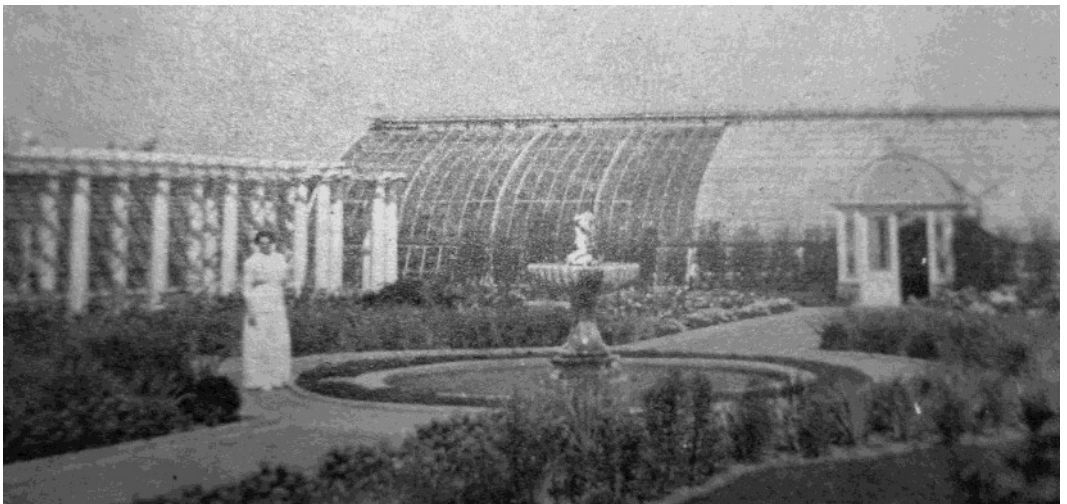
Photograph from “*Progressive West Virginians*” (Wheeling News, 1905).



[Above]: **The Schmulbach mansion in its heyday.**

[Below]: **The Schmulbach greenhouse.**

Photographs from the photo album of Corina A. Friedrich, friend and travel companion of Pauline Schmulbach. Courtesy Corina's great-niece Elaine Strauch.





his brewery closed because of the passage of West Virginia's Yost (prohibition) Law, he became very ill and died on the evening of August 12, 1915.

Within a year, Pauline sold the mansion to the county for \$125,000, and shortly after that, the estate was turned into a poor farm, with a wing added to facilitate more residents. Down the road past the mansion, a structure was built that would later house TB patients.



**The mansion during its use as a poor farm.**

*Photograph courtesy Gary Timmons.*

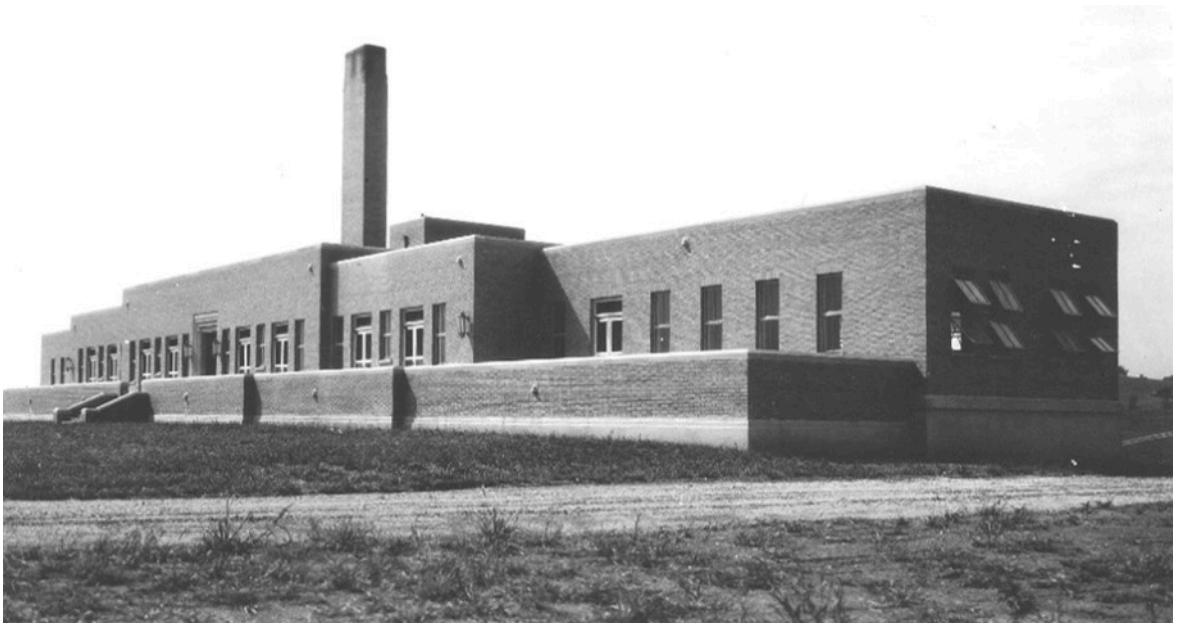
On September 17, 1936, in cooperation with the Anti-tuberculosis League of Wheeling, Ohio County opened a state of the art facility atop the hill at Roney's Point. Built at the cost of \$170,000, the structure replaced the

earlier, smaller sanitarium that had been constructed just past Schmulbach's mansion. Of the total funds, \$127,000 came from the taxpayers of Ohio County, while \$43,000 came in the form of federal grants.

The new facility was designed to accommodate forty patients and contained two twelve-bed wards, two six-bed wards, and four private rooms. Wide windows were located near the beds, each of which was fitted with a light for nighttime reading along with headphone connections where the patient could choose from three radio stations.

The building was 217 feet long and eighty feet wide, and was designed to handle another story if expansion was desired at a later date. The kitchen was located in the basement and was equipped with ventilators to remove cooking odors. The basement also housed a refrigeration system that could make up to 500 pounds of ice a day, three steam boilers (two for heating and one for sterilization), and a recreation room where patients could watch motion pictures. The facility also contained an operating room and an X-Ray room.

The property was described as being self-contained and reportedly served its patients well after opening. A cemetery was also located on the property for those who had passed



**The new tuberculosis hospital at Roney's Point.** Photograph courtesy The National Archives.

away at the poor farm, TB hospital, and for paupers. Graves were also moved to the county farm cemetery from the Peninsula Cemetery during the construction of Interstate 70 in the 1950s. It's estimated that over 800 people are interred at the cemetery.

From 1946 to 1963, the sanitarium cared for a total of 360 patients. In the early 1960's, with new medical advancements made in the testing and treatment of tuberculous, residents and county commissioners began to question the need for the sanitarium on the Schmulbach property, the doors to Schmulbach's mansion and the poor farm having already been closed in 1963. In September of that year, Dr. Sonnenborn, the director of

the Roney's Point sanitarium, argued for keeping the facility open as long as there was a need. At that time, the hospital had eleven patients and two pending, who had recently been approved to be admitted. But Sonnenborn's plea to keep the facility open would not be heeded for very long.

The Roney's Point sanitarium closed its doors on September 30, 1964. Ohio County commissioners were then tasked with how to use the property. Many suggestions were made, including leasing to the Salvation Army for use as a nursing home and giving the remaining land to the Wheeling Park Commission. At the time of its closing, the state prison used the property for a farm.

In 1967, the county claimed to have “no use for the property and buildings that formerly made up the county home and farm.” At that time, the TB hospital and nurses’ residence were being used by the Florence Crittendon Home for Girls. Two houses on the property were also being used as juvenile detention centers. County commissioners planned to raze all of the buildings with the exception of TB hospital and nurses’ residence, claiming that the other structures “were in a state of disrepair.”

By 1968 the Ohio County commissioners had struck a deal with the state that involved turning over 250 acres that would be used for the purpose of a pilot program with Weston State Hospital (a psychiatric treatment facility with the unfortunate nickname, “Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum”). In the fall of that year, twenty patients from Weston were brought to Roney’s Point and given the opportunity to live

in new surroundings and prepare for their return into society. By 1969, the goal was to rehabilitate 150-200 patients throughout the next year. The first twenty patients sent to Roney’s Point had been at the Weston facility anywhere from six to thirty-two years. Only four of those patients did not complete the program and were sent back to Weston. The rehabilitation program was said to have relieved the state’s taxpayers of a major burden. According to the “fact sheet,” for example, the sixteen inmates who completed the program had been costing the state of West Virginia \$143,800 a year for their care. Furthermore, it was argued, without such a program, many Weston patients would never have had the opportunity for release.

Despite the fact that the state added an alcoholic treatment unit in 1972, the mental hospital and former Schmulbach estate seemed to be in jeopardy. Later that year, Dr. Mildred Bateman,

## **Ohio County Tuberculosis Sanitarium** **Roney's Point Box 600, Triadelphia**

**A hospital for the treatment of tuberculosis patients who are residents of Ohio County. Admissions are handled by the Ohio County Health Department and the Ohio County Board of Commissioners.**

**SANITARIUM LISTING,** *Wheeling Intelligencer*, Saturday, April 20th, 1963.

who served as the director of the mental health facility, made arrangements with the Valley Grove and Triadelphia volunteer fire department to burn down the following buildings as part of a training exercise: county infirmary, juvenile detention center, grounds keeper's residence, carriage house, dairy barn, milk house, and eleven other unnamed structures that were on the property. Afterward the training exercise, the National Guard was called upon to bulldoze the charred ruins over nearby hillsides. Bateman's plans for the mansion seemed unclear at the time, but according to a September 1972 *News-Register* article, much of the structure was still intact.

"The towering pillars leading into the spacious central hallway openly invite the visitor into the huge high ceilinged rooms off to the sides of the main entrance. An impressive rectangular stairwell, centering around a gigantic stained glass window bearing the Schmulbach crest, leads to the second level. From there the upstairs hallway flows into an endless assortment of adjoining bedrooms, anterooms, sitting rooms, dressing rooms, and bathrooms. Solid cherry woodwork, both on the doors and the walls themselves, is much in evidence and in comparable excellent condition. Imported blue streaked marble

enhances the bathrooms as well as the numerous fireplaces contained on the first floor. The remnants of rich looking blue, maroon, green, pink, and gold paint wallpaper and tapestries adorning the walls are still visible, although greatly aged and weather beaten."

The inglorious demise of the once opulent Schmulbach mansion occurred in the early morning hours of October 2, 1975. At approximately 2 am, employees at the mental health center reported the sounds of "explosions" coming from the property. The Valley Grove and Triadelphia volunteer fire departments were dispatched to the scene, but by the time they arrived the mansion was a total loss. Was it vandalism? A natural gas explosion? The source or cause of the damage wasn't reported, though a car was seen leaving the area. James Clouser, the deputy director of administration for the West Virginia Department of Mental Health said, "no estimate of damage to the state owned building could be made. The mansion had deteriorated to the point that it was considered dangerous to patients at the center, and state officials were contemplating having the structure razed."

In the late 1970's, the doors of the mental health center were closed permanently, and on April 24, 1980, newly elected governor Jay Rockefeller announced at a Democratic dinner at



**This photo of the mansion in increasing disrepair was taken by Robert Ward in the early to mid-1970s. Photograph provided by author.**

Wheeling College that Ohio County would receive the title to the state controlled Roney's Point property for development as a light industrial area. Rockefeller said the transfer of ownership would have "special and long range significance." When asked if tenants were lined up for the property, Rockefeller commented that roads and utilities would need to be established

before further plans could be made for the industrial park.

In October of 1981, plans to turn the abandoned TB facility into a regional juvenile detention center were discussed. Sheriff Tom Campbell noted that the property would be ideal for a detention center, and inmates could help restore and fix up the grounds.

Campbell said, “There’s plenty of room outside to play ball. Just look at the view. You can see by all the scenery there wouldn’t be any running away. There’s no place for them to go.” Sheriff Campbell also noted that the biggest expense in moving forward with such a project would be installing a new furnace. At that time, only a few rooms in the old TB sanitarium were being used for storage.

From 1963 until the late 1990’s, sporadic talk of using the property for an industrial park appeared in the newspapers, but plans would never materialize. In the mid 1990’s, residents

throughout the Roney’s Point area protested the proposal to build a privately run prison on the property.

Today much of the property is overgrown with trees and brush. The nurses’ residence is used by a caretaker who oversees the property, and only the TB sanitarium’s towering chimney is still visible, the remainder of the building being almost entirely engulfed by trees.

And it’s nearly impossible to visualize the former grandeur of Henry Schmulbach’s mansion from the fire damaged ruins that remain.

**PHOTOGRAPHS OPPOSITE.**

**Top:** The sad remains of the Schmulbach mansion.

**Bottom:** The remains of the TB sanitarium and nurses’ residence.

Photographs by Ryan Stanton, April 6, 2020.





## AUTHOR BIO:

Ryan Stanton is a 2002 graduate of Wheeling Park High School. In 2006 he graduated from West Liberty State College with a bachelor's degree in history and later earned a master's degree in social studies education from West Virginia University. For ten years, Ryan has been a social studies teacher at Wheeling Park High School where he teaches AP U.S. government and politics and the history of Wheeling.

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## 800 GRAVES

### THE TUBERCULOSIS SANITARIUM AT RONEY'S POINT

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- \* Dillion, Glenna A., *The Cemeteries of Ohio County, West Virginia*. (2007).
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, September 31, 1921, p12.
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, September 17, 1936, p2.
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, September 28, 1963, p8.
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, September 1, 1964, p2.
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, December 21, 1967, p29.
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, March 10, 1969, p9.
- \* *Wheeling Intelligencer*, August 16, 1997.
- \* *Wheeling News-Register*, September 29, 1968, p9.
- \* *Wheeling News-Register*, August 6, 1972, p25.
- \* *Wheeling New-Register*, October 2, 1975.
- \* [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



# OHIO COUNTY ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS LEAGUE

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The first concerted effort in West Virginia to promote any statewide scheme of tuberculosis control occurred with the organization of the West Virginia Anti-Tuberculosis League in December of 1907. Dr. Harriet B. Jones of Wheeling was appointed its Executive Secretary in 1908.<sup>1</sup>

Jones led the charge to start a local anti-tuberculosis league, asking the men and women of Wheeling to donate 2 cents a week, a total of \$1 a year, to "show whether the people of Wheeling really desire to protect themselves and stamp out a disease which is destroying more people than any other and is preventable."<sup>2</sup>

**SUBSCRIPTION BLANK**  
**ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS FUND**

Fill this out, tear off and mail to the Anti-Tuberculosis Society, Wheeling, W. Va

**PLEDGE**

I promise to pay, on or before September, 1, 1915,  
..... Dollars to the treasurer of the Ohio  
County Anti-Tuberculosis League.

(Signed) .....

Subscriptions may be left at any bank in Ohio county, or  
newspaper office Make checks payable to W. A. Wilson,  
treasurer.

**ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS FUND SUBSCRIPTION BLANKS**, asking for donation pledges, ran in the *Wheeling Intelligencer* in 1914 and 1915.

First organized by Jones on May 20, 1909,<sup>2</sup> the Ohio County Anti-Tuberculosis League received its charter August 29, 1911, with the authority to "erect and maintain hospitals for the care of persons afflicted with tuberculosis." Incorporators included Dr. Harriet B. Jones, Dr. Eugenius A. Hildreth, Dr. William H. McLain, Jesse Bloch, and Henry M. Russell,<sup>3</sup> with Jones serving as the first President of the charitable organization.

Dr. George F. Evans, future president of the West Virginia State Medical Association, would write in 1940: "Dr. Jones is the pioneer of all tuberculosis efforts in West Virginia and from her untiring efforts, often supported with little financial resource, there was laid a firm foundation and structure for all the Anti-Tuberculosis work that has since developed in West Virginia."<sup>1</sup>

## END NOTES

1. Evans, G., M.D., "History of the West Virginia Tuberculosis and Health Association," *Chest Journal*, December 1940, V. 6, Issue 12, p380.
2. *Wheeling Intelligencer*. May 18th, 1909.
3. "Medical News," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, V. LVII, No. 13, Sept. 23, 1911, p1063.

# BREAKING THE “GRIPPE”

## WHEELING DURING THE 1918 SPANISH INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

SEÁN DUFFY & ERIN DENISE ROTHENBUEHLER

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*“I had a little bird,  
Its name was Enza.  
I opened the window,  
And in-flu-enza.”<sup>1</sup>*

Schools were closed. So were restaurants, amusement parks, theatres, movie houses, and even the public library. Hotels sat empty. Meetings, parties, and society events were canceled. Sporting events were postponed. People were told to stay in their homes. Even church services were canceled.

Sound familiar?

We’ve been here before, more than a century ago, when the “Spanish Influenza,” aka the “Spanish Flu,” aka “La Grippe,” struck Wheeling and the rest of the planet in the fall of 1918.

The Spanish Influenza got its name not because the virus originated in Spain (the first known case was actual-

ly reported in Kansas), but because Spain was neutral in the First World War, so did not have wartime censorship like the combatant nations, who suppressed news about the influenza to keep up morale. Since most reports about the pandemic were coming from radio free Spain, the name “Spanish Flu” stuck.<sup>2</sup>

The cause of the ensuing global pandemic (one of the worst in human history) was the H1N1 virus of avian origin (thus, “bird flu”). According to the CDC, more than 500 million people worldwide became infected, at least 50 million of whom died (some estimates soar to nearly twice that number). Deaths in the United States surpassed 675,000, more than those caused by the American Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Unlike with COVID-19, at least as far as we know at this point, H1N1 was fairly lethal to all age groups, but even more so to the young.<sup>4</sup>

In Wheeling, two hospitals did the work. Affectionately known as the “City Hospital,” Ohio Valley General Hospital (OVGH), took the lead, admitting influenza patients immediately following the first diagnosed Wheeling case on October 2.<sup>5</sup>

According to its own records, Wheeling Hospital treated 567 people with influenza in 1918, 94 of whom died.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the obituary columns of the local newspapers during the fall of 1918 were daily filled with victims of pneumonia, which (as with COVID-19) was the proximate cause of death as

the H1N1 virus also aggressively attacked victims’ lungs.<sup>7</sup>

The problem was exacerbated, of course, because the onset of the pandemic occurred during the First World War. It was first detected on American shores among military trainees in the spring of 1918 (the U.S. having declared war on Germany in April 1917, hurriedly initiating a draft and sending trainees to camps in order to expedite entry into the European conflict).

U.S. Army training camps — like Camp Lee at Petersburg, Virginia,

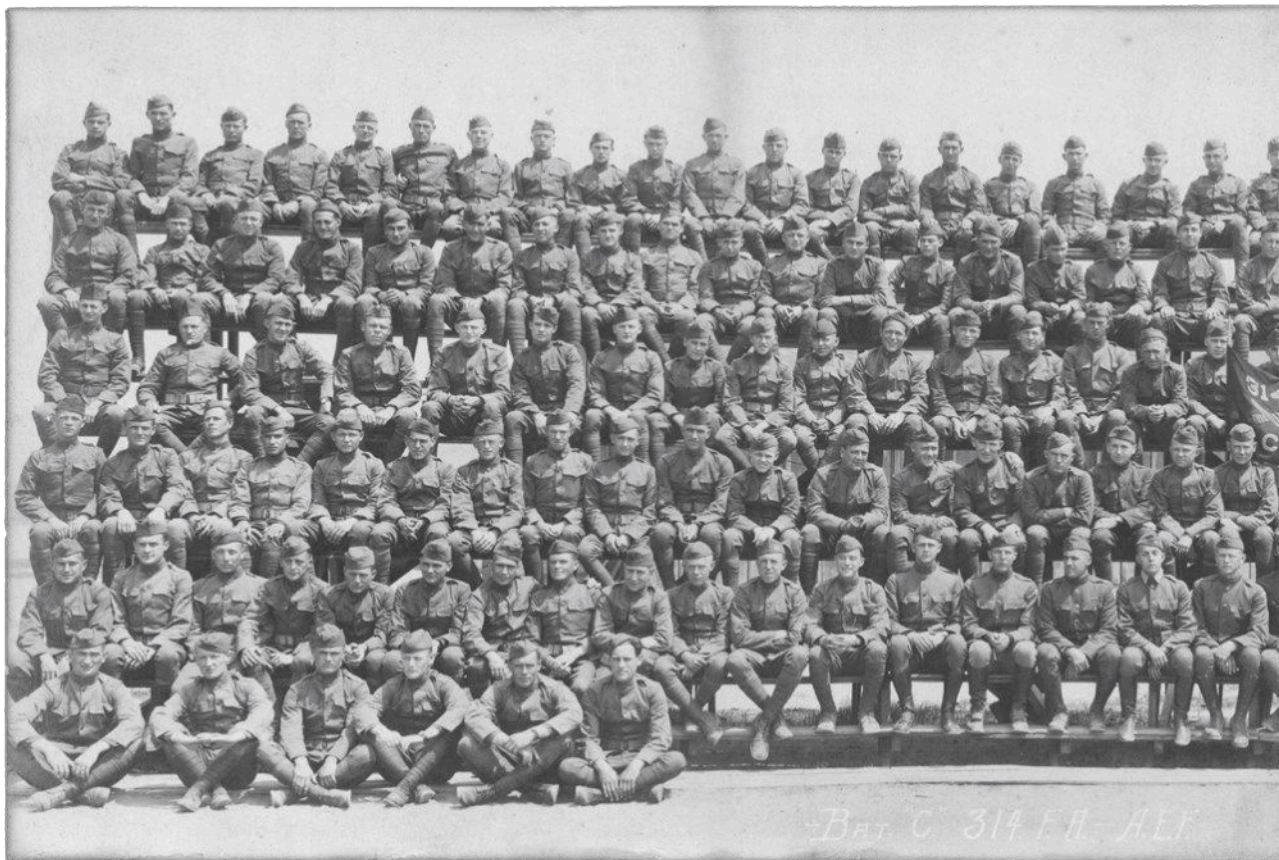


**OVGH (“City Hospital”) Postcard, circa early 1920s.** OCPL Archives, *Postcard collection*.

where the majority of Wheeling draftees were trained — with thousands of young, would-be soldiers jammed together in barracks, cafeterias, and latrines, became hotbeds for the spread of the virus on American soil.<sup>8</sup> And infected men who, having no symptoms, traveled home on furlough, then unwittingly transmitted the virus to friends and family. Even as the epidemic appeared to have peaked in military camps, it spread rapidly

among the civilian population, reaching 43 states (of 48 at the time) by Oct. 2. But by the end of the month, new cases were on the rise at the camps as the influx of new trainees continued.<sup>9</sup>

On October 5, the grim news broke of several influenza deaths among Wheeling's own military personnel at training camps. In addition to nurse Alice Young, Warwood's Pvt. J. William Bauman and South Wheeling's Donald

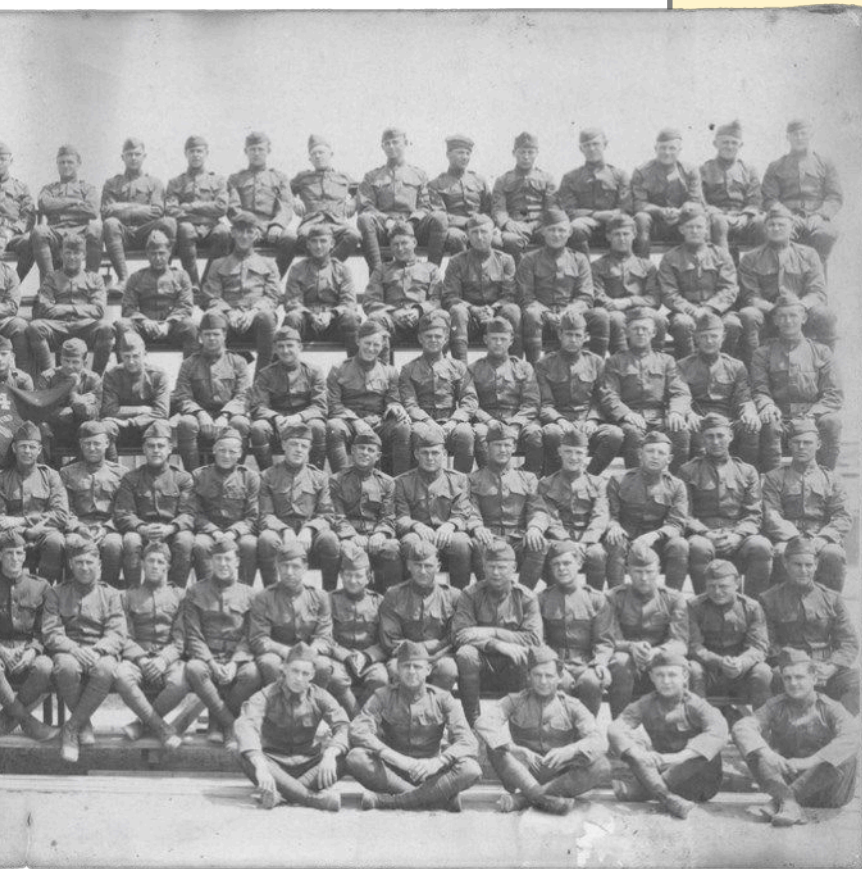


**Camp Lee Cadets, Battery C, 314th Field Artillery, 80th Division.** Photo courtesy Patti Storm Gatts.



Shipley and James Yates died at Camp Lee, while Pvt. Percy Hannan, also from South Wheeling, passed at Camp Meade. Four days later three more Wheeling men succumbed, including Raphael Fawcett at Camp Dix, New Jersey, William L. Mikels of Warwood at Camp Meade, and Robert F. Davis at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia.<sup>10</sup>

But the focus soon shifted to the home front.



## CAMP LEE

Spanish Influenza first appeared in Camp Lee on September 13, 1918, when eleven cases of "acute respiratory infection" were reported. By the morning of the 16th, 500 influenza cases had been diagnosed in the camp. By October 2 (just two weeks), that number had exploded to 8,500 cases, with 167 deaths. Another 220 deaths would be recorded

between October 4 to 11, and by October 12 – one month after the first influenza case had appeared – 10,876 cases had been reported, and the total number of deaths on the base had risen above 500. By the 19th of October, when officials no longer considered the influenza to be epidemic on the base, out of the 16,000 men stationed there, over 11,000 influenza cases had developed and 626 deaths had been recorded at Camp Lee.

### SOURCE:

Barker, S. F., "The impact of the 1918-1919 influenza epidemic on Virginia" (2002). Master's Theses, pp. 5, 15, 25, 28.

# THE PANDEMIC GRIPS WHEELING

According to the West Virginia State Health Department, the pandemic hit the state hard in the fall of 1918: "Late in September the so-called Spanish influenza appeared in the eastern end of the state, and spread with surprising rapidity until every part of the state was in the throes of a virulent epidemic..."<sup>11</sup>

We know from the records of Ohio Valley General Hospital that the first case was diagnosed in Wheeling on October 2, 1918.<sup>12</sup>

A few days later on October 6, Wheeling's City Council was called to a special session "for the purpose of taking action on the threatened epidemic of Spanish Influenza," during which an order was proposed by Dr. M. B. Williams, Health Commissioner for the City. The order read:

"Epidemic Influenza has reached Wheeling, and threatens to become epidemic. We now have eleven cases and already one death. Eight of these in the past twelve hours.

In the opinion of Surgeon General Rupert Blue of the United States Public Health Service, and

also in the opinion of All Public Health Authorities, the only way to stop the spread of Influenza is to close churches, schools, theatres, and public institutions in every community where the epidemic has developed.

The spread of Epidemic Influenza in other states has shown that public gatherings and places where large numbers of people are likely to congregate, play important parts in the dissemination of the disease, and as the disease at this time shows definite site signs of assuming serious proportions, drastic measures must be taken at once.

Therefore by the authority vested in me as Health Commissioner of the City of Wheeling under Section 4 of the Health Ordinance, I hereby order the immediate closure of all places of public entertainment, such as theatres, moving picture establishments and pool rooms, also all schools, churches, Sunday schools, and other public institutions where people congregate in numbers. All meetings of every description both indoors and out, are prohibited.

All funerals must be private, meaning that they shall be limited to the fewest possible persons.

Every person is requested to use the street cars as little as possible, walking whenever the distance is not too great. Unnecessary calls to stores for shopping purposes should not be made. Hospitals are instructed to stop all visits to patients except relatives.

The Health Department wishes to repeat its warning issued in the past few days: Don't sneeze – Don't cough – Don't spit. If absolutely necessary use your handkerchief. Don't crowd. When sick call your physician and go to bed...

These orders are to become effective immediately and remain in force until further notice from this Department.

M. B. Williams, M. D.  
Health Commissioner.”<sup>13</sup>

Council approved the order and a further motion was carried that “the Chief of Police be instructed to vigorously enforce the anti-spitting ordinance and that he also be instructed to arrest and prosecute any violators.”<sup>14</sup>

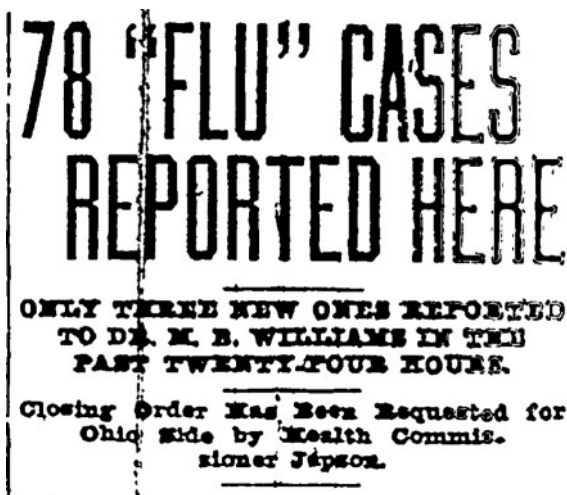
At that point, Dr. Williams became the busiest man in town. His daily re-



**CITY OF WHEELING HEALTH DEPARTMENT STREET SIGN, “DO NOT SPIT ON SIDEWALK. TO DO SO IS UNLAWFUL AND SPREADS DISEASE. FINE \$1.00 TO \$5.00.”** OCPL Special Collections.



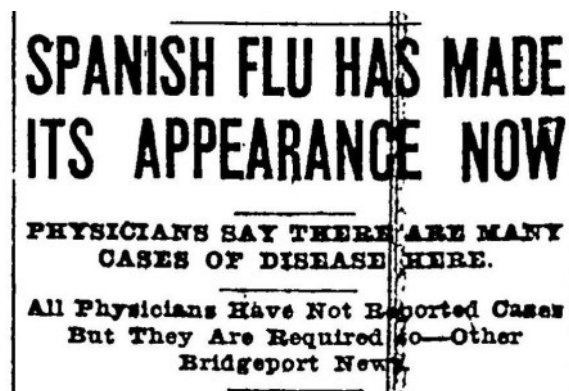
port throughout October typically included dozens of new cases of influenza and the deadly pneumonia it facilitated. By October 19th, nearly 200 cases and nine deaths had been reported in town. Many died quickly after a "brief illness."<sup>15</sup>



People were advised to seek treatment if they exhibited any early "cold-like" symptoms, which included "a sharp rise in temperature to 103 to 104 degrees, headache, pain in the back, throat feeling dry or sore."<sup>16</sup> Flu survivors described the early stages of the disease as sounding like "a concrete mixer is operating in one of the ears." The said ear would later become very sore.<sup>17</sup>

Wheeling's neighboring river towns were not exempt. Brooke County's Board of Health issued a shutdown of schools, poolrooms, lodges, churches,

and all public gatherings on October 15.<sup>18</sup> By Halloween morning, Moundsville, WV reported a total of 104 cases.<sup>19</sup> Across the river, Bridgeport, Ohio officials reported the city's first cases on October 17 and admitted that the virus had probably infiltrated much earlier.



"Keep the Crowd Moving" was the adopted slogan in Bellaire as the city's board of health closed schools, churches, theatres, and saloons on October 25th.<sup>21</sup> In Steubenville, the first case was reported to the board of health on October 14. "All public places, the schools, churches, library, theaters and salons were ordered closed. Within a week, all of eastern Ohio was in the grasp of a terror from which there was no escape. Seventy-one new cases of the disease were reported in one day."<sup>22</sup> Police were called upon to enforce the quarantine at the Steuben-

**INTELLIGENCER HEADLINES,**  
**LEFT:** OCTOBER 14, 1918. **RIGHT:** OCTOBER 18, 1918.  
*Clippings from OCPL Digital Newspaper Archives*  
[ohiocountywv.advantage-preservation.com](http://ohiocountywv.advantage-preservation.com)

ville hospital where the third floor was made an influenza ward. Entire families were admitted, with at least 125 cases in November and December. The small town of Dillonvale reported 94 cases in just two days.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most distressing local cases involved the Baker family of Lind Street. All six of the family's children, along with their mother, were stricken with the dreaded influenza and admitted to OVGH, even as the patriarch lay bedridden at home in critical condition with Bright's disease (a kidney disorder). Six-year-old Virginia, 16-month-old Joseph, and 4-year-old Ruth eventually succumbed. A fund-raising effort led by the Wheeling newspapers collected \$1300 for the destitute family.<sup>24</sup>

The heartbreaking specter of child funerals (including a double one at the Baker home) haunted the obituary page almost daily.

### **Child Dies of Spanish Influenza.**

The remains of the twelve year old son of Louis Evempolis of Market street arrived in the city yesterday afternoon. The boy died of Spanish Influenza at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Tuesday afternoon, where he had been confined for some time, undergoing treatment. The funeral will be held this after-

noon from the family residence and interment will be made in Greenwood cemetery.<sup>25</sup>

## **OVERWHELMED**

Wheeling's two hospitals were quickly overwhelmed. According to Wheeling city council minutes, on October 22, Wheeling City Manager G. O. Nagle told the council that both the Wheeling Hospital and OVGH were nearly filled to capacity and that additional hospital beds would be needed.<sup>26</sup>

Health commissioner Williams suggested, at one point, establishing an emergency hospital in the old Haskins Hospital property,<sup>27</sup> foreshadowing similar talk by 2020 Mayor Glenn Elliott of reopening part of the OVMC building (formerly OVGH) for the same



**HASKINS HOSPITAL**, LOCATED AT 3327 EOFF ST. IN SOUTH WHEELING, CLOSED ITS DOORS JUNE 1, 1915. Photograph from *Haskins Hospital*, 1915, OCPL.

purpose in response to COVID-19.<sup>28</sup> The Haskins idea was abandoned when the City found the property was too far gone from hospital grade, and the prospect of reuse too expensive and daunting. Instead, the focus shifted to expanding the capacity of the two existing hospitals.<sup>29</sup>

According to the 1918 minutes, Williams suggested, and Nagle proposed,

that the hospitals increase capacity “by enclosing certain large porches which both hospitals possess by constructing temporary side walls, and installing emergency lighting and heating equipment.” This idea was executed by both institutions. Nagle opined (in concurrence with Williams) that the city should pick up the tab, and furthermore, should pay for destitute citizens who became patients. These noble



**THE BACK PORCHES** FACING THE OHIO RIVER AT WHEELING HOSPITAL IN NORTH WHEELING WERE ENCLOSED DURING THE 1918 INFLUENZA OUTBREAK. *Photograph from “Seventy-Five Years Of Faithful Service, 1853-1928,”*(North Wheeling Hospital: 1928), OCPL.

gestures were to fizzle when the pandemic subsided.<sup>30</sup>

City Council then passed a resolution authorizing and empowering the City Manager and the Health Commissioner to “make such arrangements and take such action as in their judgment is reasonably necessary in caring for patients suffering from influenza during the present emergency.”<sup>31</sup>

## CITY HOSPITAL DURING THE PANDEMIC

After the 2019 closure of the Ohio Valley Medical Center (formerly Ohio Valley General Hospital) the Ohio County Public Library Archives was entrusted with the hospital’s board of directors’ minutes. Fortunately, the 1918 minutes are a part of the collection, and they provide interesting insights into the pandemic in Wheeling.

The Superintendent of OVGH in 1918 was Pliny O. Clark, and he submitted monthly reports to the board.

In his October 17 report, Clark noted that there were seventeen influenza patients at OVGH. They had been admitting such patients for two weeks, during which time two had died from pneumonia. Clark asserted that OVGH was the only hospital in the district to admit influenza victims for the first

week. He later stated that the first case in Wheeling was diagnosed on October 2, 1918, and that no influenza patients had been refused by OVGH since the crisis had begun. Clark specifically named Wheeling and Glendale as the local hospitals that did not accept influenza patients at first, but noted that both were doing so by October 17.<sup>32</sup>

In his November report, Clark said that the Health Commissioner had asked local physicians to send only emergency work to the hospital, which reflects the current situation as people are being asked to defer elective surgeries. For OVGH in 1918, the move proved wise, cutting the number of surgeries in half for November and by two thirds for December, by which time OVGH was caring for as many as 100 Influenza cases per day, yet the crowding situation was decreasing.<sup>33</sup>

By November 19, OVGH had admitted 195 influenza patients, confining them to the third and fifth floors. Many of these patients were placed on the fifth-floor porch constructed in response to the recommendation by health commissioner Williams (see above). The entrances to the stairway from the second and fourth floors were temporarily blocked.<sup>34</sup>

Volunteer school teachers (the schools having been ordered closed) were making supplies for the hospital.

Clark was so impressed, he asked them to organize a permanent organization to be known as the Hospital Emergency Corps. "In addition to the school teachers," Clark reported, "we have had several others who have assisted in various ways: Mrs. Alexander Glass assisting in the kitchen work continuously; Miss Anne Reymann also assisting in kitchen work, as well as Mrs. J. A. Bloch..."<sup>35</sup>

Around the same time, the *Intelligencer* noted that Father Moyer at St. Joseph's Cathedral, not to be outdone, had volunteered the Catholic School teachers and Sisters from Cathedral School to lend a hand to the health department.<sup>36</sup>

Influenza also afflicted OVGH board members, three of whom were absent from the November and December meetings.<sup>37</sup>

At the December meeting, the Red Cross was said to be willing to supply pneumonia jackets for use in the hospital.<sup>38</sup> In the age before antibiotics, such jackets were used to treat pneumonia patients by helping to keep them warm. They sometimes included rubber tubes through which warm water could be circulated.<sup>39</sup>

Mrs. Alexander Glass (wife of the Wheeling Corrugating Co. founder and future Wheeling Steel chair), offered to pay for the rental of an apparatus de-

veloped in Cleveland for the treatment of pneumonia.<sup>40</sup>

By January 1919, OVGH was almost exclusively treating influenza patients, the number of which began to drop in mid-December. Also in December, several OVGH doctors began to return from France. As late as March 1919, OVGH lost seven more influenza patients to pneumonia.<sup>41</sup>

In December, Superintendent Clark discussed the growing costs of the pandemic to the hospital, exacerbated by the loss of revenue as many of the new cases were "charity cases." Unusual expenses included the aforementioned pneumonia jackets (\$2 or about \$35 today), extra gowns, masks, and the cost of sterilization (alcohol), as well as the cost of expanding the staff to meet the emergency.

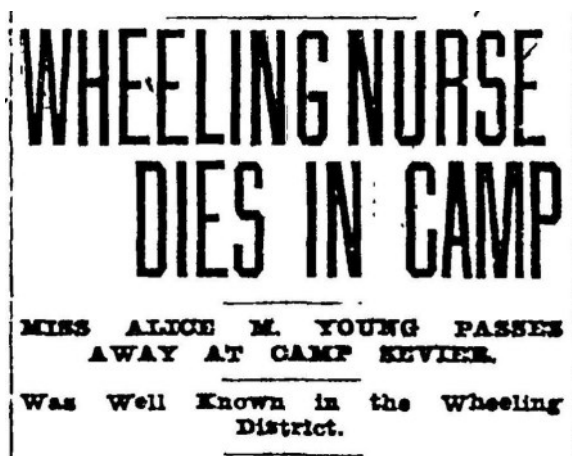
Clark and the board closed the year trying, unsuccessfully, to recoup some of the influenza expenses the hospital had incurred from the city of Wheeling, which had been promised by City Manager Nagle (see above).<sup>42</sup>

## NURSES

Early in October, the national Red Cross began pushing local organizers to recruit more nurses, nurses' aides, and volunteers between the ages of 19 and 35 to help with the flu crisis.<sup>43</sup> Lo-

cal Red Cross supervisors Mrs. R.J. Bullard and Mrs. Susan Cook expected as many as 200 to be registered from the Wheeling area.<sup>44</sup>

On October 5, the *Intelligencer* reported the sad news that Alice M. Young, a registered nurse from Wheeling who graduated from the Ohio Valley General Hospital School of Nursing class of 1901 and was working at Camp Sevier in South Carolina, died after a bout with influenza and pneumonia.<sup>45</sup> She is the only woman from Ohio County listed in the Veteran's Memorial Database maintained by the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History.<sup>46</sup>



*Wheeling Intelligencer*, October 5, 1918.

In his monthly report to the hospital board, OVGH Superintendent Pliny O. Clark made note of Young's death, writing, "So far as we know, this is the first death among the twenty-three

nurses who have gone into Red Cross work, from this Hospital."<sup>47</sup>

OVGH made noteworthy efforts to protect its nurses from infection. Clark wrote:

"We are protecting so far as we are able, by spraying twice or three times a day, and requiring that all nurses while on duty wear masks, and that they eat five times a day; furnishing the very best food we can procure; more meat than usual. We hope in this manner, to reduce the danger. Our Officers are, however, working at tremendous pressure, and I would not be surprised to hear at any time, of the entire force being stricken down."<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, as many as nineteen OVGH nurses were soon ill with influenza, and the city hospital was severely understaffed. One of these, a Miss Groves, died of pneumonia on October 22. A stricken intern recovered and returned to work. In addition to illness, many staff were lost to military service. By December, the school of nursing had canceled classes so that the students could be available to help with the influenza patients. A member of the housekeeping staff died in December, and nineteen of twenty-one laundry employees were out with the virus.<sup>49</sup>

On October 11, eight local Wheeling graduate nurses, including Margaret Schwinn, Josephine Detterman, Cecilia Finnerty, Nancy Hoppel, Julia Severin, Grace Droppleman, Ann Burke, and Lula McMann, were sent off to either Virginia or Camp Meade in Maryland, where the flu situation was particularly acute.<sup>50</sup> Alice McChesney, a student at Mt. de Chantal reportedly assisted a Red Cross military nurse at Camp Hancock, “and proved to be an untiring worker during the ‘flu’ epidemic.”<sup>51</sup>

On October 22, the Red Cross made another plea, this time for 2000 “strong, cheerful, energetic, self-reliant, and typically American, that is, capable of self-sacrifice and devotion” women, between 25 and 35 years of age, for hospital and canteen work in France.<sup>52</sup>

YWCA girls continued to meet in small groups during the influenza outbreak. In December they “designed, stuffed, and dressed rag dolls, which were distributed by the visiting influenza nurses to children who would have very little Christmas. The dolls were original and attractive and the nurses reported that they were joyfully received by 21 children.”<sup>53</sup>

The impact of the pandemic on nursing was significant. Owing possi-

bly to the effects of war and pandemic, the OVGH school of nursing had only one probationer for spring 1919. Typical class size was thirty. Superintendent Clark theorized: “I expect...young women have been making such good wages, that they do not...now care to settle down to a three year’s grind in



**OVGH SCHOOL OF NURSING CLASS OF 1922,** WHOSE STUDENTS WOULD HAVE ENROLLED IN SPRING, 1919, ONLY PRODUCED NINE GRADUATES. *Photograph courtesy OVGH School of Nursing Alumni Association.*



preparation for nurse's work." <sup>56</sup> Despite recruiting efforts at local high schools, the enrollment situation did not improve much by fall 1919, when Clark described the shortage as "acute" and "alarming." <sup>55</sup>

## SCHOOL'S OUT FOR FALL

*What is it like, this Spanish 'Flu'?  
Ask me, brother, for I've been  
through,  
A combination of misery and  
despair;  
It pulls your teeth and curls  
your hair,  
It thins your blood and brays  
your bones,  
And fills your craw with  
moans and groans,  
And sometimes, maybe, you  
get well,  
Some call it 'Flu'; I call it H—!"*  
- "The 'Flu'" by Ex., 1919 <sup>56</sup>

Wheeling schools were closed on October 5 by order of the West Virginia Health Department. <sup>57</sup>

According to Wheeling High School's 1919 yearbook, unsurprisingly, especially without the option of online classes, the students at first felt celebratory about the cancellation of classes: "October 4 - November 11 - No

school on account of 'Flu.' This is heaven on earth! The weather is glorious...Many hikes and picnics enjoyed by different groups..." But that tone would quickly change as the reality of quarantine set in: "Great life! Lightless nights, dateless nights, meatless meals, and no movies!! We are asked not to frequent soda fountains and stay out of street cars!! O mine! O mine!" <sup>58</sup>

## SPORT OUTLOOK IS STILL A QUESTION

**Teams of This Locality Will Be Tied Up  
Indefinitely And Outlook Is Not  
Very Bright.**

*Wheeling Intelligencer, October 18, 1918.*

The high school's football team played only four games all season. "The 'Flu' was the cause of it all!" Yet, the school closure was not continuous. Classes reconvened in mid-November - "Back to school after a heavenly vacation of six weeks." - in time for football games against Martins Ferry and Linsly. But, "November 24 - 'Flu' ban back - no more school...." Yet on Nov. 30, another game was played against Bellaire, then, "No school till January 2." <sup>59</sup>

This inconsistency, another lesson for 2020, was the result of an impa-

tience born of mixed messages from government and media (see *The Importance of Consistency*, pg. 72).

Because of the stops and starts, the classes of 1918 and 1919 were combined for graduation: "...we did not start alone, for the senior B's decided to double up their work and graduate with us. Time has fairly flown, and here we are, members of the class of 1918 ½ graduating from the best and most beloved school ever." <sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, and again, in a lesson for 2020, a consistent adherence to the spirit of quarantine had very different results at Mt. de Chantal:

"To guard against the dread influenza, a strict quarantine was observed from October sixth to December twenty-first. No visitors at all were permitted and a ban was placed upon trips to town. The cherished Thanksgiving vacation was cheerfully sacrificed and the holidays we were deprived of were added to our Christmas vacation. Under God's Providence, as a result of these strict precautions, *the Mount was mercifully spared a visitation of the scourge* [emphasis added]." <sup>61</sup>

Had the city followed the Mount's example, lives might have been saved.

## CURES, PREVENTIVES, TREATMENTS, & FOLK REMEDIES

*"The doctor called the other day  
He said, 'You have the flu.'  
I trembled at those awful words.  
And asked, "What shall I do?"*

*Go right to bed, cover well,  
And sweat and sweat like —  
thunder!  
'All right,' I said and then I  
sneezed  
Till near did sneeze asunder.*

*He left a spray with orders keen.  
To use it much and often;  
So I'm doing as the doctor said,  
But sneezing and a'coughing*

*I am not a church going man,  
But do believe in praying.  
So from morning 'till late at night,  
I'm Spraying! Spraying! Spraying!"*  
-Anonymous <sup>62</sup>

In addition to vague hopes that things like rain would somehow "purify the air," businesses and people came up with a wide range of schemes and potions to stop the dreaded virus.

Nurses at Ohio Valley General Hospital reportedly wore masks "not unlike the gas masks used by the soldiers

in France" while treating influenza patients at the hospital.<sup>63</sup> This was confirmed in Superintendent Clark's report to the OVGH board.<sup>64</sup> Ordinary citizens were advised to wear gauze masks, which could be procured free of charge from the Red Cross.<sup>65</sup>

Anti-expectoration and well-functioning bowels became something of an obsession, as this October 23 *Intelligencer* piece confirms:

"When a fellow spits or blows the mucous from his nose on the floor or sidewalk the germs soon become part of the dust of the air and will be breathed in by others. If you cough, sneeze or laugh in another man's face you cause him to breathe your germs. Ventilate your sleeping quarters well. Avoid crowds because the air in crowded rooms just now is certain to contain the germ. Take plenty of exercise, keep bowels open and avoid all excess."<sup>66</sup>

At no point, however, in reading hundreds of articles about the Spanish Influenza in Wheeling's newspapers or other sources, did we encounter the suggestion that people should simply wash their hands as is the case today.<sup>67</sup>

Local businesses like Baer's Drug Store made efforts to contain the virus. Baer's started using "sanitary paper cups" at its soda fountains, and local

**NOTICE TO  
PUBLIC**

---

**Making  
A Clean  
Fountain  
CLEANER**

**At Both Our  
Soda  
Fountains  
we use  
Sanitary  
Paper Cups---  
No danger  
at Baer's  
from Influenza  
We do not  
think that  
at this time  
washing glasses  
even if washed  
clean  
is safe.**

---

On account of the epidemic of influenza we do not think it is wise to hold our regular Saturday and Monday sale. We will continue them as soon as the danger is passed.

**Baer's  
Drug Store**

Baer's Drug Store Advertisement, Wheeling Intelligencer, October 19, 1918.

barbers were said to be considering the “wearing of masks.”<sup>68</sup> The Wheeling Traction Company and West Virginia Traction & Electric Company started fumigating their street cars with eucalyptus oil every morning before the cars left the barns. They also vowed to keep windows open during transit, though there seemed to be a few complaints about unopened windows.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to national brands like Vick’s Vaporub (who suggested that nature combined with a good laxative and, of course, Vaporub, was the cure), bizarre things like Bulgarian Blood Tea (yes, Bulgarian Blood Tea) were said to help ease symptoms of the Spanish Flu.<sup>70</sup>

**DON'T LET**

# **Colds, Grippe, Spanish Flu**

**GET YOU**

The Right Thing to - DO  
The Right Way to Do— IT  
The Right Time Is—NOW

## **BULGARIAN BLOOD TEA**

Steaming hot at bedtime—that's all. Large and small sizes at all druggists.

*Wheeling Intelligencer, October 24, 1918.*

Offered at local druggists like Griests, Coleman’s, Baer’s, Irwin, and Hoge-Davis, Nostriola brand balm or

liquid was said to “open air passages” to keep an acute cold from somehow becoming an attack of Spanish Influenza.<sup>71</sup> Keeping the bowel open with calomel or saline draught was recommended, along with ten grains of Dover’s powder (an opium-based concoction used to induce sweating) at night.<sup>72</sup>

Coleman’s drugstore promoted its own “Magic Balm,” which would “prevent an attack by keeping the nose and throat clean,” as well as its own “Antiseptic Solution” for gargling, as “the nose and throat are the seat of the infection for this dreaded disease.”<sup>73</sup>

## **Guard Yourself Against Spanish Influenza!**

Prevent an attack by keeping the nose and throat clean with **COLEMAN'S MAGIC BALM**. Price 35¢.

Also gargle frequently with **COLEMAN'S ANTISEPTIC SOLUTION**. Price 35¢.

These are wise and necessary precautions to take, as the nose and throat are the seat of infection for this dreaded disease.

**ATOMIZERS** ..... 50¢ to \$1.75.

# **COLEMAN'S**

## **Three Drug Stores**

1010  
Main St.
16th and Market  
Streets.
2500  
Chapline St.

*Wheeling Intelligencer, October 9, 1918.*

Meanwhile, Wheeling’s Nostriola Balm Company was pushing its “Mus-Tur-Pep,” a frightening mixture of

mustard, turpentine, and pepper marketed as the best and surest way to relieve Grip pains.<sup>74</sup> And C.H. Griest & Co. Druggists touted Phosphated Iron as a "blood tonic" to "Get the blood right."<sup>75</sup>

## USE ONLY "MUSTURPEP" NOW FOR CHEST COLDS AND "GRIP" PAINS

Watch the Danger Signals. Don't Neglect a Cold. For Quick Relief Greaseless "MUS-TUR-PEP" Is Best and Surest.



Prompt preventive measures now is the proper thing. Don't take chances. At first sign of an acute cold which may prove to be the beginning of an acute attack of Spanish Influenza, the "Grip" or Pneumonia, rub on MUS-TUR-PEP cover parts with a newspaper and awake next morning with all misery gone. Get a small jar of MUS-TUR-PEP of your druggist today and keep it handy for instant use when needed day or night by any member of the family. Accept only the original MUS-TUR-PEP put out by the Nostriola Balm Company Wheeling W. Va., in red white-green, Haus Irwin's. Hoge-lavis "money back" guarantee by Griest's, to and blue carton. Sold here (under and all druggists.

Wheeling Intelligencer, October 29, 1918.

Dismissing the novelty of Spanish Influenza as just like "Old Fashioned Grip," Dr. Hartman's world famous PE-RU-NA anti-catarrhal boasted the ability to restore and maintain "a healthy condition of the mucous membranes" which, of course, was the best way to ward off Spanish Influenza.<sup>76</sup> Another insidious ad disguised as a recommendation from the "Health Board" provided more dubious advice when it recommended running to the drugstore for a "Hyomei outfit" [another type of anti-catarrhal] consisting of a bottle of the pure Oil of Hyomei and a little

vestpocket, hard rubber inhaling device into which a few drops of oil are poured."<sup>77</sup>

## SPANISH INFLUENZA

### Resembles Old Fashioned Grip

The symptoms of Spanish Influenza are very similar to old fashioned grip—pains throughout the body, extreme dizziness, sleepiness, chills, high fever, headache, disturbed digestion with running at the nose and eyes and excessive spitting, showing an inflammation and congestion of the mucous linings.

### Manifested by Catarrhal Condition

With the first symptoms of Influenza, it is well to consult your family physician at once. It is not the disease itself that is to be feared so much as it is the complications which may follow.

To ward off Spanish Influenza or as an aid to returning health after an attack, nothing is any better than Dr. Hartman's World Famous Peru-na.

## For Catarrh of Every Description Take PE-RU-NA

The well known and direct action of Peru-na in restoring and maintaining a healthy condition of the mucous membranes throughout the body makes it the greatest disease preventing and health restoring remedy known to science.

For forty-five years Peru-na has retained its title as a reliable safe-guard to the health of the American family.

EXPERIENCE OF USERS THE BEST RECOMMENDATION

Wheeling Intelligencer, October 29, 1918.

Liquor sales jumped as temperance advocates blamed propaganda about "coffin varnish" being a powerful flu preventive.<sup>78</sup>

Recommended disinfectants included exotic sounding herbal potions like perfume of carbolic acid, asafetida (a pungent member of the celery family also known as "stinking gum" or "devil's dung"), and old-fashioned formaldehyde.<sup>79</sup>

On October 11, a Pittsburgh based homeopathic physician named George

## Put on "Heavies" as Influenza Armor



Get 'em on, put 'em on  
and keep 'em on

Cold weather is almost here and it brings the danger of body chilling which is almost certain to cause influenza. Even those who ordinarily postpone putting 'em on until the snow flies should put 'em on at once. They are armor protecting the body against chill, and we know of no better place to select what you want than right here.

Shirts and Drawers...\$1.15, \$1.25, \$1.50, \$2  
Union Suits.....\$1.50, \$2, \$2.50, \$3

### There is Danger in Damp Feet



Better wear rubbers than become an object of interest to undertakers. Rubbers that fit any style shoe you wear and of course the price will be less than anywhere else, quality considered, of course. And just this one more word—we want it emphatically understood we sell nothing but first quality rubber footwear.

### An Invitation

Come in when you are passing the store and walk back to the rear of the shoe department and see the greatest rubber footwear display in this valley. Everything is out on display where you can examine what you want and nobody will bother you. Come in, make yourself at home.

THIS IS YOUR STORE

1122-1124 MARKET STREET

**McFADDEN'S**  
THE MEN'S STORE

F. Baer claimed to have experimentally discovered a successful treatment and "inoculation against the malady." But Baer's "preparation," comprised of an odious sounding mixture of iodine and creosote, apparently failed to save the day.<sup>80</sup>

Remedies were not limited to potions or concoctions. McFadden's Men's Store on Market Street advertised its thermal underwear line known as "Heavies" as "Influenza Armor," based on the unscientific assumption that "body chilling" caused influenza. The same ad pushed the company's "rubber footwear" line because: "There is danger in damp feet...Better wear rubbers than become an object of interest to undertakers."<sup>81</sup>

Industrial laborers, many of whom had habitually shared public drinking cups at work, began to carry individual folding drinking cups in their pockets—a wise move.<sup>82</sup>

Home remedies included fried onions and sugarless, hot lemonade, which was touted as both therapeutic and patriotic.<sup>83</sup>

"M.S.," a Wheeling High School graduate, class of 1919 (or 19 ½ as the joke became due to the school delays), gives us an idea of the unsavory nature of even medically prescribed treatments: "Time passed, public schools closed and reopened, yet I did not

contract this horrible disease...I began to pride myself on being so careful as to spray my throat and to take various other so-called preventatives...But alas, pride goeth before a bump! I was stricken. The doctor laid his carefully sterilized hand upon my brow. The things that I swallowed at his command in the next three days!!! However I shall draw a dark curtain over these painful memories...When first stricken, crawl into a hole and stay there and don't take any medicine. The 'Flu' isn't so bad but it's the medicine that kills you!"<sup>84</sup>

We may find these desperate efforts and snake-oil myths amusing, but 100 years later, the desperate myth-making continues.

## MARTINS FERRY & BRIDGEPORT QUARANTINE WHEELING

In an effort to prevent the spread of the virus across the Ohio River where tantalizing saloons and stores were operating freely, the cities of Martins Ferry and Bridgeport, Ohio, initiated a largely ineffective "quarantine" against residents of Wheeling, requiring a permit for residents to cross into Ohio and vice versa.<sup>85</sup>

Bellaire refused to join the coalition, enabling Wheelingites to circumvent the effort by simply crossing into Ohio by ferry from Benwood. "All cars, machines, streets, roads, pedestrians and dreams lead to the Benwood Ferry," the *Intelligencer* advised, decrying the conspiracy of "over the river towns" led by the "Czar of Bridgeport" and "His Majesty of Martins Ferry" as a "Bad Grudge" and a "Raw Stunt" on the people of Wheeling. With an average of 180 people per ferry, the concern that such a concentration of people would actually increase the infection risk seemed warranted. In fact, the quarantine was apparently begun at the request of Dr. M.B. Williams, Wheeling's health commissioner, who saw the Ohio saloons as an inviting infection risk, especially after 78 new flu cases were reported in Wheeling on October 14.<sup>86</sup>

Wheeling's legal saloons had been shuttered since the 1914 Yost Law was passed, prompting Wheeling visitors to ask, "How do I get to Bridgeport?"<sup>87</sup> When the quarantine proved detrimental to the saloon business in Bridgeport and Martins Ferry, talk of ending it ensued. But what then? Close the saloons? Early rumors had "several large business interests" directly petitioning President Wilson to "close all liquor establishment within a five-mile area of the war works firms here." But this gained no traction. Entangled in an economic/ethical conundrum of their



own creation, the "Czar" and "His Majesty" begged U.S. Surgeon General Rupert Blue to send a federal "investigating committee" to make the decision for them. It was not forthcoming. Dr. Blue had other priorities.<sup>88</sup>

The quarantine's lack of effectiveness was exposed just two days later, when Wheeling city health commissioner Dr. M. B. Williams sent a telegram to the Ohio state Health Commissioner, J.E. Baumann, complaining that the open saloon policy in Bridgeport resulted in overcrowded street cars and large crowds at the saloons themselves, a policy that "places the dollar above the value of human life." Remarkably, all of this occurred even as Ohio prepared to vote on a new prohibition law and the Wheeling papers were filled with pro-dry advertisements.<sup>89</sup>

Ohio was not just more inviting to

drinking men, it was also about religious freedom, as Catholics made the crossing to Bellaire in order to attend Mass, their own services having been prohibited as part of Wheeling's internal quarantine.<sup>90</sup>

After being lifted and re-established a few times, the quarantine against Wheeling was back on by November 20. Wheeling officials were outraged and called in the feds. On November 21, U.S. Surgeon General Blue himself came to town to personally "take charge" and end the "squabbling."<sup>91</sup>

In a November 23 editorial, the *Intelligencer* reasonably heralded the best result:

"It is fortunate that the health regulations in this and adjacent communities are not to be left to the decision of a number of conflicting and jeal-

<b>QUARANTINE AGAINST WHEELING APPEARS TO BE A BAD GRUDGE</b>	
<b>OVER THE RIVER OFFICIALS ARE PULLING A RAW STUNT ON THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY.</b>	<b>Conditions Prevailing at Present Are Most Unsanitary and Disease Has Shown Increase.</b>

*Wheeling Intelligencer*, October 21, 1918.

ous bodies. We have been toying with the influenza epidemic entirely too long. While the inconvenience to the public caused by any regulations must be considerable, this inconvenience is not to be set against the health of the people. It would be absurd, of course, for Wheeling to quarantine against the towns across the river, or for those towns to quarantine against Wheeling or against each other. A common line of action should be followed. The new health regulations established by a competent official of the United States health service should be accepted cheerfully by everyone.”<sup>92</sup>

The quarantine was removed the same day.

## WHEELING QUARANTINES ITSELF

*“Get lots of fresh air, both  
day and night  
Keep up the shades, let in  
the light  
Don’t cough or sneeze in  
anyone’s face  
Don’t spit in any public place  
Avoid all crowds, even walk  
to work*

*A little exertion do not shirk  
If you get ‘sick’ then stay in  
bed  
Warm keep the body and  
cool the head  
High or low, in poverty or in  
wealth  
Notify the officials of public  
health...”*

-Anonymous<sup>93</sup>

Without a vaccine or antibiotics to treat secondary infections, quarantine was the most effective weapon against Spanish Influenza. In 2020, mitigation strategies remain very similar.

On October 5, 1918, the West Virginia Health Department under commissioner S.L. Jepson, at the behest of Governor John J. Cornwell and based on the recommendation of U.S. Surgeon General Rupert Blue, issued the following order to all local health officers:

“You are hereby instructed that owing to the very wide prevalence of influenza in a virulent form, this Department hereby issues instructions requiring all cases of the disease to be promptly reported and quarantined until entirely well. Local Health Officers are required, when an outbreak appears in a community, to close all theaters, poolrooms, soft drink places, schools, churches and Sunday

Schools. All public meetings must also be abandoned."<sup>94</sup>

The health department also printed a circular that was passed around in bulk and sent to the newspapers. It read in part:

"Every able-bodied man and woman who is willing to assist in stamping out the disease, especially teachers where schools are closed, should tender their services to the local Red Cross chapter or branch, which will give in-

structions and assign them to work. Doctors and nurses volunteering should wire the state health commissioner, Charleston. The need is urgent."<sup>95</sup>

By October 7, even war-related gatherings (which had already replaced society events seen as trivial during a war) held by women's clubs like Carroll Court, Catholic War Relief Society, King's Daughters, and Daughters of Isabella, were suspended. Even the state D.A.R. convention to be held in Wheeling was canceled.<sup>96</sup> These sus-

# Influenza--What to Do and What Not to Do in Fighting the Disease

By S. L. JEPSON, M. D., Commissioner of Health of West Virginia.

## WHAT TO DO UNTIL THE DOCTOR COMES.

If you feel a sudden chill or chilliness, followed by muscular pain, headache, backache, unusual tiredness and fever, go to bed at once.

See that there is enough bed clothing to keep you warm.

Open all windows in your bedroom and keep them open at all times, except in rainy weather.

Take medicine to open the bowels freely.

Take some nourishing food such as milk, egg-and-milk or broth, every four hours.

Stay in bed until a physician tells you that it is safe to get up.

Allow no one else to sleep in the same room.

Protect others by sneezing and coughing into handkerchiefs or cloths, which should be boiled or burned.

Insist that, whoever gives you water or food or enters the sick room for any other purpose shall wear a gauze mask, which may be obtained from the Red Cross or may be made at home of four

cover the nose and mouth and be tied behind the head.

Remember that these masks must be kept clean, must be put on outside the sick room, must not be handled after they are tied on and must be boiled ten minutes and thoroughly dried every time they are taken off.

## TO HOUSEHOLDERS.

Keep out of the sick room unless attendance is necessary.

Do not handle articles coming from the sick room until they are boiled.

Allow no visitors and do not go visiting.

Call a doctor for all inmates who show signs of beginning sickness.

The usual symptoms are: Inflamed and watery eyes, discharging nose, backache, headache, muscular pain and fever.

Keep away from crowded places, such as "movies," theatres, street cars.

See to it that your children are kept warm and dry, both night and day.

Have sufficient fire in your home to dispense the dampness.

Open your windows at night. If cool weather prevails, add extra bed cloth-

## TO WORKERS.

Walk to work if possible.

Avoid the person who coughs or sneezes.

Wash your hands before eating.

Make full use of all available sunshine.

Do not use a common towel. It spreads disease.

Should you cough or sneeze, cover nose and mouth with handkerchief.

Keep out of crowded places. Walk in the open air rather than go to crowded places of amusement.

Sleep is necessary for well-being. Avoid overexertion. Eat good, varied food.

Keep away from houses where there are cases of influenza.

If sick, no matter how slightly, see a physician.

If you have had influenza, stay in bed until your doctor says you can safely get up.

## TO NURSES.

Keep clean. Isolate your patients.

When in attendance upon patients, wear a mask which will cover both the nose and the mouth. When the mask is on in place do not handle it.

Wheeling Intelligencer, October 11, 1918.

pensions were viewed as part of the patriotic duty. "Society is at a standstill so far as affairs of a higher vein are concerned," the *Intelligencer* lamented on October 12, yet "every loyal woman has made each day result in 100 per-cent accomplishment in her particular branch of patriotic service..."<sup>97</sup>

The Wheeling Women's Club, for their part, traveled to local factories and plants, including Kalbitzer Packing, Reymann Packing, Neuralgyline Co., Warwick China, Bloch Brothers Tobacco, White Swan Laundry, Northwood Glass, Gee Electric, Wheeling Tile, American Sheet and Tin Plate, and Wheeling Mold and Foundry, with Red Cross nurses and doctors to educate workers by "spreading anti-flu propaganda."<sup>98</sup>

To help local businesses cope, the Secretary of the YWCA Industrial Extension Committee continued to visit "industrial centers" throughout October and November, "giving talks before the employees in regard to Precautionary measures against the influenza."<sup>99</sup>

Even Red Cross meetings were forbidden under the quarantine, but Ms. Bullard, Ms. Cook, and staff persisted by working from home, another tradition that continues.<sup>100</sup> As late as October 16, the Red Cross workers of the local "Italian Society" were planning a dance at Arion Hall "providing the 'flu'

ban is lifted," of course. It was not.<sup>101</sup>

Both the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly and the J.W. Holliday post of the G.A.R. (Civil War veterans) suspended meetings for the first time in their respective histories.<sup>102</sup> In November, the YWCA's board voted to close Bible classes, "until the Influenza is completely over."<sup>103</sup>

In Marshall County, the Republican Party canceled all of its planned speaking engagements for November candidates and all of its committee meetings.<sup>104</sup>

The Ohio towns of Martins Ferry, Bridgeport, and Bellaire joined the quarantine effort on midnight, October 25, decreeing that "all schools, churches, picture houses, theatres, lodge meetings and in fact everything of this nature will be done away with until the ban is lifted."<sup>105</sup>

The effects of quarantine were often heartrending. In Bellaire, for example, a mother and daughter quarantined in their home with smallpox, were allowed to view the body of a second daughter who had died of influenza. The open coffin was placed on the porch so that they could briefly grieve.<sup>106</sup>

Back in Wheeling, the ongoing campaign to support the war effort with the sale of Liberty Bonds clashed

with the quarantine requirements regarding the flu. Mid-month, for example, the city permitted the Musicians Union Band to parade in support of the Liberty Loan campaign, decreeing by way of compromise: "Crowds will not be allowed to collect, and the band will not be permitted to stop, but will have to keep moving. Persons will not be allowed to follow the band."<sup>107</sup>

With 34 new cases reported, the flu put an end to Halloween "pranks and parties." It was in fact, "the quietest Halloween in the History of Wheeling."<sup>108</sup>

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY & TRUTH-TELLING

A big part of the problem with the 1918 quarantine effort was one of inconsistency. Newspaper headlines constantly declaring the epidemic was under control, or that the quarantine would be lifted, soon caused confusion and distrust, making compliance more difficult to obtain. This is a lesson for the present. To get buy-in and compliance in order to "flatten the curve," we must have a consistent message from the top down.

False hope during the 1918 pandemic was an epidemic of its own, as numerous headlines as early as mid-October

trumpeted the end of the flu and the return of normalcy. No matter how bad things got, statements of conditions were routinely softened with boasts about how well Wheeling was doing compared to other communities.<sup>109</sup>

As early as October 10, the *Intelligencer* asserted that the epidemic was "under control" since only five new cases had been reported in 24 hours.

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# "FLU" EPIDEMIC UNDER CONTROL

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**CITY HEALTH COMMISSIONER WIL-  
LIAMS REPORTS FIVE NEW  
CASES, MAKING 41.**

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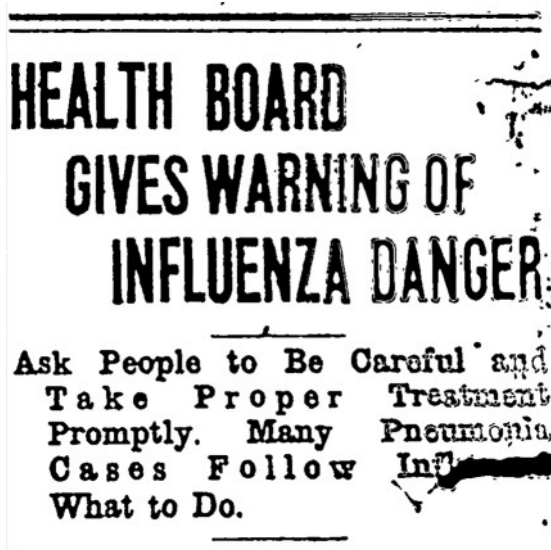
**Dr. Jepson Urges All Cases Be Watched  
as Closely as Possible—Situation  
Not Alarming Here.**

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*Wheeling Intelligencer*, October 10, 1918.

"It is thought that health officials halted the threatening epidemic by closing all public places before the disease had become widespread," the writer boasted. This was due to the closing of the saloons in Bridgeport and Martins Ferry — the same saloons that would be mysteriously reopened two weeks later.<sup>110</sup>

On October 16, seven new cases in 24 hours was hailed as a sign that the “closing order” would be lifted in “only a few days.” It was not.<sup>111</sup> Instead, on October 23 forty-three new cases meant that the people of Wheeling were “not exercising all due precaution to stamp out the disease” and the spike in cases was “caused by neglect on the part of citizens to adhere closely to the instructions issued by the health department.”<sup>112</sup> This bit of atypical candor was quickly tempered just three days later, as 22 new cases and several deaths were viewed as indicative that the situation was “under control.”<sup>113</sup>



*Wheeling Intelligencer*, October 22, 1918.

During the long wait for the “All clear,” the mantra for sporting and social events became: “As soon as the influenza regulations are lifted in this

city...” Then, as now, the most consistent griping was sports-related, as football and baseball games were routinely scheduled, analyzed, then canceled at the last minute because of the much-despised “ban.”<sup>114</sup> Bowling clubs also canceled “a number of spirited contests.”<sup>115</sup>

Shows like “the Unmarried Mother” scheduled to run at the Court Theatre were promoted routinely, always with a disclaimer like, “providing the Spanish Influenza order is lifted by Health Commissioner Williams. Seats go on sale tomorrow.”<sup>116</sup> This constant drumbeat could not have been helpful in keeping people focused on containment strategies.

On October 31, the *Intelligencer* reprinted a communication from West Virginia Health Commissioner S. L. Jepson, which read in part,

“Since the time is approaching when the subsidence of the influenza epidemic will be so marked that it will be safe to withdraw all quarantine regulations, the State health Commissioner hereby announces that since he cannot possibly know local conditions as well as can the local health authorities, he will not assume the responsibility for removing the quarantine restrictions. This must be determined by the health authorities of each municipality and county...”<sup>117</sup>



Yet the pandemic did not end.

In December 1918, as Wheelingites waited desperately for the quarantine to be lifted, things got dicey, nerves were frayed and tempers flared. The theatrical stage employees and motion picture operator's organization unions, for example, "passed resolutions condemning the action of the city officials in their 'on again, off again' policy in regard to the placing of the ban." The frustration stemmed from the fact that city manager Nagle and health commissioner Williams lifted the ban on November 22 after a six-week layoff, then put the ban back in place on November 23 with a 6 pm curfew.<sup>118</sup>

On November 23, the *Intelligencer* mocked the curfew:

"The 'flu' germ was abroad all during the night. This morning the germ will hunt its home and remain there until 6 o'clock tonight when the hideous thing will emerge and scatter disease and death among the citizens of the Ohio Valley. That is the least that can be said about the present quarantine regulations existing at present in this section."<sup>119</sup>

And eloquently expressed a sentiment in support of what we now call "social distancing" that would serve us well in 2020:

"Too much emphasis is laid on the dollar. In a great many persons' opinions, the dollar should go begging if one life can be saved by a strict quarantine. Pressure is brought to bear by the managers of amusement companies and moving picture shows that they are losing money by a strict observance of the quarantine regulations. No one has complained but the managers. It would appear from the history of the past few days that managers of theatres place dollars above life and health in this city and in the Ohio Valley as well. Many people are of the opinion that if a strict and absolute quarantine will stamp out the disease then it is time to stop playing and get busy in that line. About the best thing to do is to make people believe that the flu germ lives in the daytime as well as at night."<sup>120</sup>

But on December 9, another reporter contradicted his colleague:

"We endorse the action of the theater managers in the stand they have taken in trying to keep the city open and to compel the health department to quarantine and placard homes as was done in other cities, believing that this rule if fol-

lowed out would have done more to keep Spanish influenza from spreading than other unimportant rules which were laid down. Quarantining would have at least kept the people who have been exposed in their home and prevented the spread of disease.”<sup>121</sup>

Frustration mounted as, even when the pandemic seemed to end, it sprang back to life. The December 13, 1918 edition of *Public Health Reports* from the United States Public Health Service stated that telegrams were sent to State health officers asking about recrudescence [recurrence] of the disease. West Virginia reported recrudesence of influenza in Charleston, South Charleston, Bluefield, and Clarksburg, and in Wheeling “conditions were said to be as bad as ever...”<sup>122</sup> A week later, recrudescence was noted at Sutton, Pineville, Lester, Shepherdstown, Huntington, and Clothier, and nothing had changed for the Friendly City: “epidemic bad at Wheeling.”<sup>123</sup>

Finally, on December 30 the long-awaited good news broke and the circus ended as the reopening of schools after eleven weeks of closure (and one aborted re-opening) signaled the end of Wheeling’s quarantine period. A slew of social events and New Year’s Eve parties were subsequently announced.<sup>124</sup>

On January 3, 1919 the *Intelligencer* declared: “The epidemic is almost entirely wiped out.” This time, it appears they were correct. The horrific pandemic ended as quickly and as mysteriously as it had begun.<sup>125</sup>

## THE ECONOMIC IMPACT IN WHEELING

One of the major concerns about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is the probable national and global long-term economic impact, including record unemployment, bankruptcies, stock market collapse, and the possibility of recession or even depression.

In 1918, war production may have boosted the economy, but by forcing store closings and quarantine, the pandemic still had detrimental effects.

On August 31, 1918, *Bradstreet’s Weekly*, a business journal published in New York, reported “Trade at a Glance” in Wheeling positively, noting “Whole & job trade” and “Retail trade” in the district as “Good,” and “Manufacturing & industry” as “Active.”<sup>126</sup>

As the flu pandemic began to spread in West Virginia, the economic effects began to show. On October 19,

1918, *Bradstreet's Weekly* was reporting of Wheeling, "Mild weather with the epidemic of influenza have served to slow up retail trade."<sup>127</sup> A week later, the publication reported of Wheeling, "The slowing up in all lines of trade, due to influenza, is very noticeable. Coal production has fallen off about 20 per cent. Houses dealing in electrical and mining supplies report many new orders and an active business. Dealers in confections are behind on orders. Building is quiet. Collections are good. Pottery production has been ordered cut 50 per cent."<sup>128</sup>

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported the following on October 22, 1918:

"The 'flu' has put quietus on business in this city good and hard. Last week is said to have been the quietest in practically every commercial line. Across the river towns issuing quarantine against Wheeling has put the kibosh on commercial activities between this city and 'over there.' A veteran produce dealer said yesterday that last week was the quietest in his line in the past score of years."<sup>129</sup>

By November 2, the *Bradstreet's* update for Wheeling had worsened: "Business is lagging, due to interruptions caused by influenza. Retail trade has been noticeably curtailed." The "Trade at a Glance" this time reported

Wheeling's "Whole & job trade" as "Quiet," "Retail trade" as "Dull," and "Manufacturing & industry" in the district as "Restricted," with the following remarks: "Influenza restricts trade and industry."<sup>130</sup>

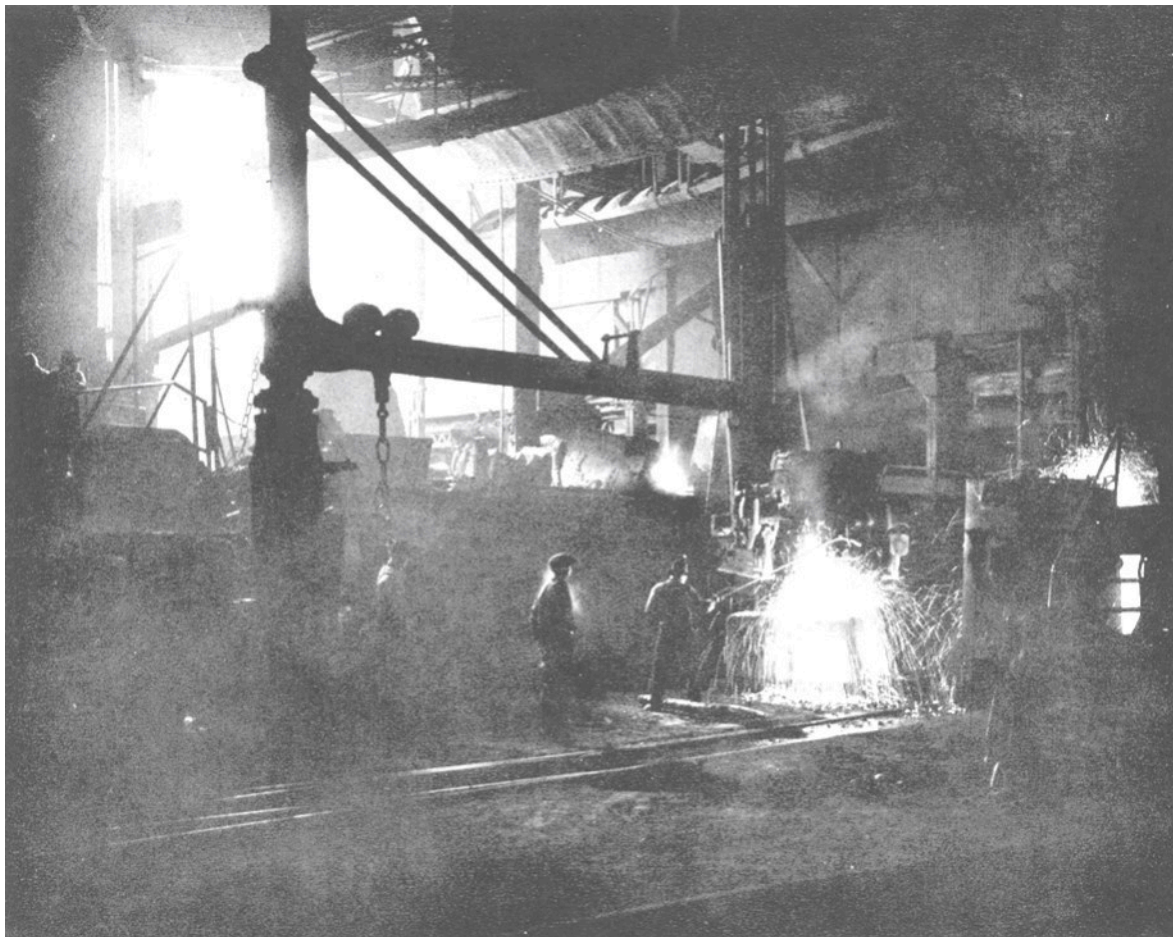
A week later, though Wheeling was still in the throes of the pandemic, the economic situation seemed to have stabilized. "Trade at a Glance" reported that the Wheeling district on November 9 showed the "Whole and job trade" as "quieter" and "Retail Trade" as "Fair," with "Manufacturing & industry" returning to "Active."<sup>131</sup> Though local businesses were recovering from the spread of Influenza through the workforce, Wheeling industries were hit with another blow. *Bradstreet's* reported that week, "Wholesale business shows some falling off and retail trade is only fair. Manufacturers continue working full time, but orders have fallen off, due to the possibilities of early peace."<sup>132</sup> Armistice would be announced just two days later, and the end of the Great War added to the economic impact of the Influenza pandemic.

Isaac M. Scott, President of Wheeling Steel & Iron Co., released a statement in the trade publication, *The Iron Age*, reviewing the company's disappointing operations for the year of 1918. "The loss in production for the year, as compared with the two previous years, can be accounted for (a) to

shortage of raw materials; (b) shortage of labor, due to the draft, and later in the year, to the effects of the influenza; (c) curtailment of operations in certain departments under orders from the Government, and (d) falling off in demand after the signing of the armistice,” noting that, “There was an active

demand for the company’s products up to the time of the signing of the armistice.”<sup>133</sup>

By the end of December, “Trade at a Glance” had returned to reports of “Good” and “Active” in Wheeling, with *Bradstreet’s* reporting, “Wholesale



**MEN RUNNING OFF SLAG BEFORE POURING A HEAT OF BESSEMER STEEL IN THE BENWOOD WORKS OF WHEELING STEEL, 1926.**

*Photograph from “From Mine to Market,” (Wheeling Steel Corporation: 1926), OCPL.*

trade is good and manufacturers are still operating full time. There has been unprecedented holiday trade with retailers.”<sup>134</sup>

## WHAT ABOUT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY?

Wheeling’s public library remained open until at least mid-October, providing fodder for attempted levity in this October 15 piece in the *Intelligencer’s* “About Town” section:

“Merchants and managers of shops and business places have put the ban on loafers during the Spanish influenza epidemic. Many of the evening loafers are now all dressed up and have no place to go – not even a motion picture house, and it’s too cool to sit in the park, and they can’t even while away the time in the evenings in the Ohio side bar rooms. A suggestion: The Wheeling public library is still doing business at the old stand.”<sup>135</sup>

The library apparently closed around the 20th of October. But that did not stop the *Intelligencer* from making dubious jokes like this one, on October 23:

“Speaking of magazines, the village wit circulated a report the

other day that the Wheeling library was not closed on account of the ‘flu’ epidemic, but it was to prevent pro-Germans from blowing up the magazines.”<sup>136</sup>

**Since the Wheeling Public Library has been closed on account of the “flu” epidemic, sales of magazines and books have increased, so report local dealers.**

*Wheeling Intelligencer*, October 21, 1918.

## EPILOGUE: 1919

“I was stricken...The words were still fresh in my mind that my dear principal had spoken but a few days before, that if ‘Any one of us died to please let him know and he would announce it from the Chapel.’ Not being ashamed of my name but afraid of what he might say either before or announcing the same, I decide to live.”

**-M.G.S., '19 ½**<sup>137</sup>

Not surprisingly, the reports of diagnosed 1918 H1N1 cases and deaths were wildly inconsistent at every level. Dealing with our own pandemic 102 years later, it seems few lessons have been learned. If testing is woefully inadequate now, imagine how it must have been in 1918. Even looking internationally, the 1918 death estimates

range from 50 to 100 million, a rather massive range.<sup>138</sup>

Consider, for example, the numbers published in 1919 by the West Virginia State Health Department:

**“Reported in Wheeling from Oct. 5-17:** Cases, 110; Deaths, 4

**Reported in Ohio Co. from Oct. 15-Nov. 15:** Complications, 127; Deaths, 75

**Reported Statewide from Oct. 15-Nov. 15:** 71,079 cases; 7,675 complications; 2,818 deaths.”<sup>139</sup>

The following caveat was included:

“This report is necessarily incomplete and does not represent the total number of influenza cases, complications and deaths which occurred in West Virginia during the epidemic. It is based upon reports from doctors in their respective communities and also upon reports from other sources. Doubtless in a number of instances the reports are based on estimates rather than correct observations.”<sup>140</sup>

Indeed.

It’s fair to say that, for all the suffering and carnage it caused, the 1918 in-

fluenza pandemic motivated positive changes in public health policy.

In 1957, the West Virginia State Nurse’s Association called 1919 a “fateful year” noting that “the 75-year history of public health work in the state contains no other single year that had more concentrated efforts on so many fronts. It was in that year that: the Legislature finally took steps to abolish panaceas for venereal disease... the state assumed supervisory control of water supplies, sewage and drainage projects with an eye on the growing evidence of links between such matters and epidemics... sanitation posters appeared in rural districts; the marking of water supplies as ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’ was begun; legislation enabled three-mill taxes to allow a county to support a full-time health officer and his assistants...”<sup>141</sup>

Wheeling city council minutes confirm that on Nov. 6, 1918, an ordinance “providing for the appointment of a Health Commissioner and constituting a Department of Health, providing regulations for communicable diseases, vaccinations,

...reporting of births and deaths, disposal of the dead, collection and disposal of garbage,

...supply and sale of water...

and keeping of clean of premises within the city of Wheeling,” among other things, was presented to the Wheeling City Council.<sup>142</sup>



The massive 26-page ordinance was adopted on April 29, 1919.<sup>143</sup> A headline announcing the passage of the “New City Health Ordinance” appeared next to an advertisement for PE-RU-NA an-

ti-catarrhal the following day in the *Intelligencer*. The 1919 advertisement made no mention of warding off influenza, instead touting, “Nature Intends You to be Well and Strong.”<sup>144</sup>

THE WHEELING INTELLIGENCER, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 1919.

## NEW CITY HEALTH ORDINANCE PASSED BY COUNCIL LAST NIGHT AND TAKES EFFECT JULY 1<sup>ST</sup>

ORDINANCE GOVERNS HANDLING  
OF ALL MANNER OF DRINKS AND  
ARTICLES SERVED AS FOOD.

Certain Amendments Have Been Pro-  
posed and for This Reason Printing  
of Code Has Been Postponed.

Wheeling's new health code is now  
law. It becomes effective July 1, 1919.  
Despite passage of the ordinance by  
council last night, council men indicated  
that at the next regular meeting certain  
amendments will be proposed and  
for this reason printing of the code has  
been postponed.

The ordinance governs vaccination,  
reporting of births and deaths, han-  
dling of food milk, cream and ice-  
cream, disposal and handling of gar-  
bage, supply and sale of water, keeping  
of animals in streets and grocery  
stores, better shops, meatery and  
children's hospitals and like institu-  
tions, and cleaning of premises. A fine  
of not more than \$100 and imprison-  
ment of not more than one year are  
provided as penalty for violations.

The word "big" is used. Feature is  
that dealing with milk bottles. Certain  
dealers have attempted to have inserted  
a paragraph requiring owners to ex-  
change bottles, and providing penalties  
for using or having bottles not their  
own. This was debated for more than  
an hour and was stricken out.

Barbers removed in amendment re-

## ALLIES TAKE MEASURES TO FEED TEUTONS

PARIS, April 29.—The supreme econ-  
omic council at its meeting Monday  
passed upon measures for feeding Ger-  
many and the northern neutral coun-  
tries and Switzerland. It was announced  
that the usual armistices authorities  
have removed restrictions on German  
fishing in parts of the North Sea. The  
official statement on the meeting issued  
today reads:

The supreme economic council met  
at 10 a. m. on April 28, under the  
chairmanship of Lord Robert Cecil.  
Following German fishing in the  
Skagerrak and Kattegat the council  
was advised that after its action at  
the last meeting upon the German request  
for permission to fish in those waters,  
the naval armistices authorities have re-  
moved restrictions as to the Kattegat  
and have extended the North Sea limits



Nature Intends  
**YOU** to be  
Well and Strong

Health is yours by right. Don't  
fight nature by abusing and ne-  
glecting your body. Help her.

If troubled with catarrh of the  
nose, throat and bronchial tubes,  
get rid of it. Indigestion, pains in stomach and bowels, belching gas,  
bloating, nausea, vomiting, constipation all indicate a catarrhal  
condition which is a menace not to be neglected. Rheumatism is another  
disease for which catarrh is responsible.

Catarrh may attack the mucous linings in any organ or in any part  
of the body.

**PE-RU-NA**  
FOR CATARRH AND CATARRHAL CONDITIONS

For coughs and colds or any inflammation of the mucous mem-  
branes PE-RU-NA has stood the test of forty-six years. PE-RU-NA  
will ward off the Grip or Spanish Flu and aids greatly in  
the return to health after an attack.

PE-RU-NA is a strength and body builder. It helps  
digestion, aids elimination, purifies the blood, tones up  
the nervous system. It gives one that feeling of strength,  
stamina and vigor which makes life worth while. Take  
PE-RU-NA and know the joy of doing, the joy of being  
well and strong.

Have a healthy body. It is your right.  
A bottle of PE-RU-NA is fourteen ounces of ready-to-take prevention and protection.

TABLETS OR LIQUID

SOLD EVERYWHERE

## CONCLUSIONS

Some have argued that the most im-  
portant lesson we can learn from the  
H1N1 pandemic of 1918 is that govern-  
ments must tell the truth, gain public  
trust, and gain compliance for things  
like “social distancing” and closures to  
“flatten the curve.”<sup>145</sup> By studying  
Wheeling's experience in 1918, we learn  
that city officials and media did not al-

ways tell the truth, preferring a false  
optimism in order to lift morale for the  
war effort. When this happened, the  
result was always the same: the bans  
and quarantines had to be brought  
back, and the time for containment was  
pushed forward, resulting in more in-  
fections, and more deaths.

As many have correctly noted, we are  
all in this together. And the sooner we  
comply with the necessary steps for sup-

pression of COVID-19, as they have been laid out via many sources, the sooner we will be able to return to normalcy.

The good news is, despite many

mistakes, we survived 1918, and we will survive 2020. The only question that remains is, how much time and how many people will we lose before we heed the vital lessons of our history?

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## POST SCRIPT

This article was originally published on [archivingwheeling.org](http://archivingwheeling.org) on March 20, 2020. As of that date, the State of West Virginia had reported a total of 8 COVID-19 positive cases in six of 55 counties (11% of WV) and no deaths. The Ohio County Public Library had been closed, “until further notice,” for five days.

As of the publication of this edition of the UOVHR, April 28, 2020, the State of West Virginia has reported a total of

1095 COVID-19 positive cases in 51 counties (93% of WV) and 38 deaths. Ohio County experienced its first death on April 13<sup>th</sup> with a total of 26 positive cases reported as of the 28<sup>th</sup>. Jefferson (77), and Wayne (84) counties are quickly approaching the 100 mark with Berkeley (141), Jackson (129), Kanawha (157), and Monongalia (103) counties having already reported over 100 cases. The Ohio County Public Library has now been closed for over six weeks with no set reopening date.

*\* Statistics reported daily by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (WV DHHR) at <https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/>.*

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## WITH GRATITUDE

Many thanks to Mary McKinley, Jim Stultz, and the many other former Ohio Valley Medical Center staff and School of Nursing alumni who obtained permission to release hospital meeting minutes and helped the Ohio County Public Library staff procure the records of the Ohio Valley General Hospital/Medical Center and School of Nursing.

Thanks also to City of Wheeling Clerk BJ Delbert and the City of Wheeling Human Resources Department for allowing access to the 1918 and 1919 City Council Meeting Minutes.

Many thanks as well to the Ohio County Public Library, without whose resources we could not have written this timely article.

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## BREAKING THE “GRIPPE”

### WHEELING DURING THE 1918 SPANISH INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

## END NOTES:

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# BREAKING THE ‘GRIPPE’: WHEELING DURING THE 1918

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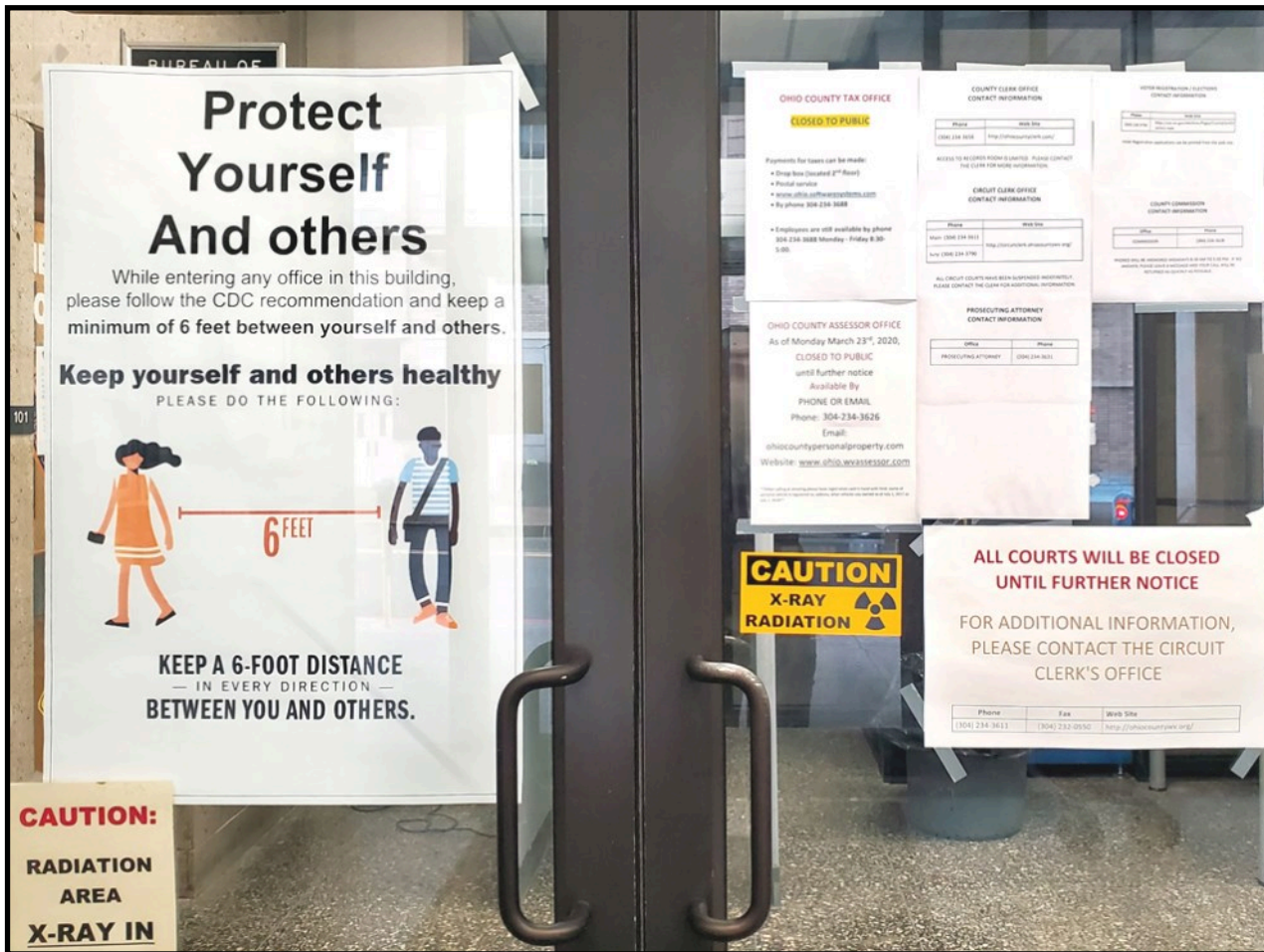
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# WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## A PHOTO ESSAY

PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN AROUND WHEELING BY UOVHR STAFF (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED) BETWEEN MARCH 15 AND APRIL 27, 2020.



FRONT DOORS OF THE CITY-COUNTY BUILDING. 1500 Chapline Street — April 26, 2020.



**MOBILE TESTING SITE, WHEELING PARK.** 801 National Rd — *April 27, 2020.*



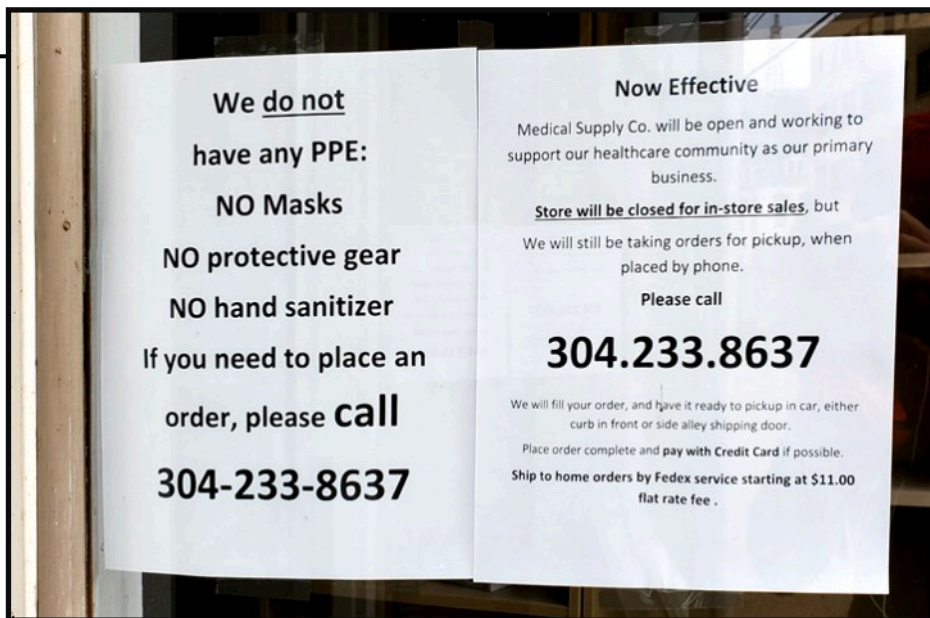
**HOMELAND SECURITY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER AT DRIVE-THROUGH TESTING SITE, WHEELING PARK.** 801 National Rd — *April 27, 2020.*



# WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: A PHOTO ESSAY



CVS. 842 National Road — March 27, 2020.



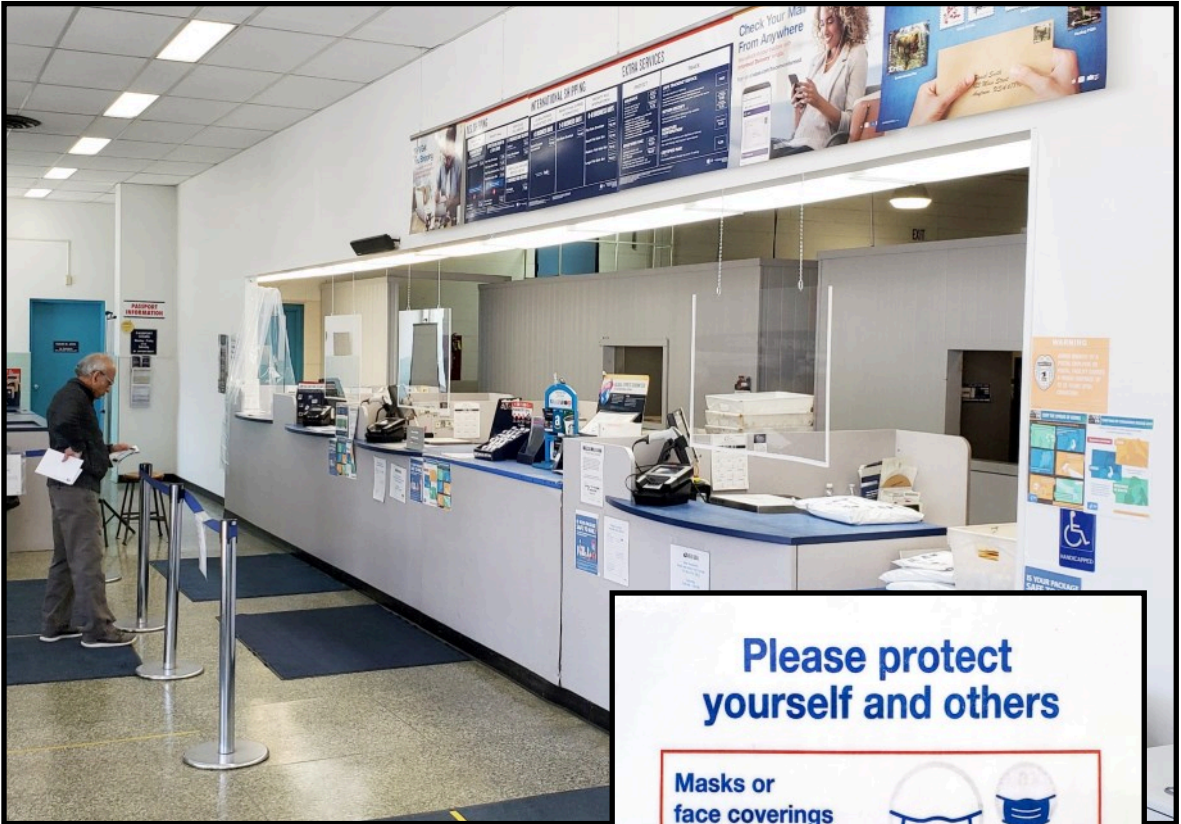
**MEDICAL SUPPLY COMPANY.** 1303 Eoff Street — April 17, 2020.



**CVS.** 842 National Road — April 27, 2020.

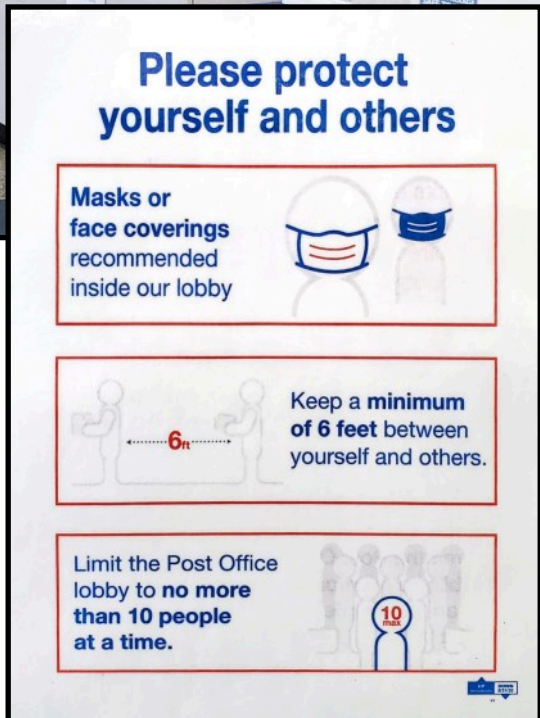


## WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: A PHOTO ESSAY



**PLASTIC SHEETING AND PLEXIGLASS SCREENS  
AT THE POST OFFICE COUNTERS.**

2501 Chapline Street — April 27, 2020.





**CUSTOMERS WAIT IN LINE, SIX FEET APART, AT LOWE'S, 2801 Chapline Street — April 5, 2020.**  
(Photograph by Alan Olson.)



**SOUP KITCHEN OF GREATER WHEELING. 1610 Eoff Street — April 8, 2020.**



## WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: A PHOTO ESSAY



**ONE-WAY AISLES AT KROGER.** 200 Mount DeChantal Road — April 26, 2020.



**UPTURNED SHOPPING CARTS FORM LINE OUTSIDE OF KROGER.** 200 Mt. DeChantal Rd. — April 26, 2020.



**PUBLIC MARKET, MEALS TO GO & CURBSIDE PICKUP.** 1401 Main Street — April 26, 2020.

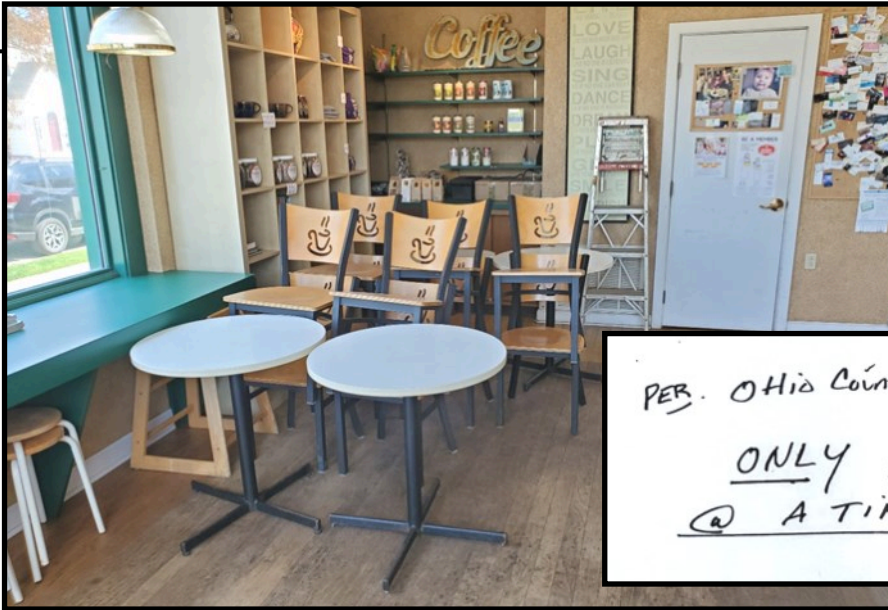


## WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: A PHOTO ESSAY



**LATER ALLIGATOR, FREE ROLL OF TOILET PAPER WITH EVERY TAKE-OUT ORDER & DELIVERY.**

2145 Market Street — April 27, 2020.



**TABLES PUSHED TO THE CORNER, WHEELING COFFEE SHOPPE.** 101 W Washington Ave — April 27, 2020.



**SARAH'S ON MAIN, MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE TO THE COMMUNITY.** 2122 Main Street — April 14, 2020.



## WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: A PHOTO ESSAY



**CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOSEPH, MASS SUSPENDED.** 1300 Eoff Street — April 8, 2020.



**VANCE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ONLINE SERVICES.** 905 National Road — April 27, 2020.



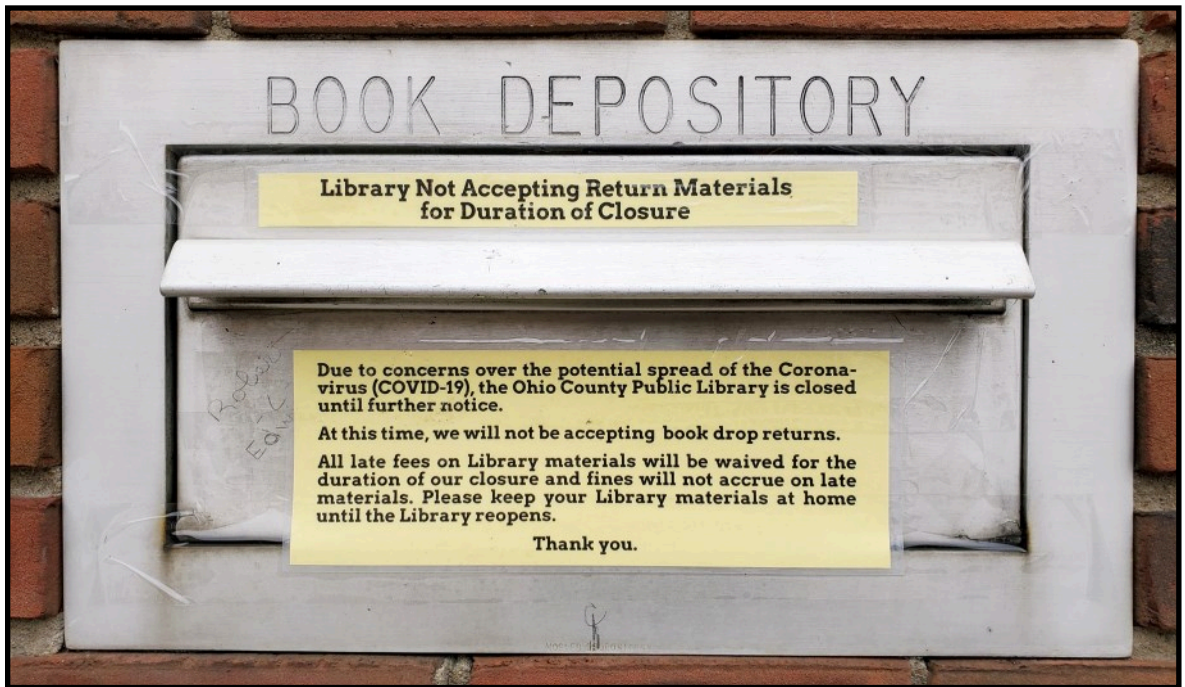


**SAINT MICHAEL PARISH SCHOOL.** 1221 National Road — April 27, 2020.



**CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, SUPPORT FOR SENIOR CLASS OF 2020.** 75 14th Street — April 24, 2020.

## WHEELING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: A PHOTO ESSAY



**OHIO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY.** 52 16th Street — March 16, 2020.



**WOMEN WITH PET CATS IN MASKS.**  
SEATTLE, WA — 1918.



**UOVHR EDITORIAL STAFF & PET DOGS WITH MASKS.**  
WHEELING, WV — APRIL 27, 2020.

Have your own Wheeling area COVID-19 photos to share? Send them to us at [UOVHR@ohiocountylibrary.org](mailto:UOVHR@ohiocountylibrary.org), subject line "COVID-19 photos."



# FINAL THOUGHTS

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Both Ada Zanusso and William “Bill” Lapschies were born in 1916, Ada in Italy and Bill in Oregon. Both were vulnerable babies during the Spanish Influenza of 1918. Both survived. One hundred two years later, after two world wars (Bill is a veteran of WWII), a Great Depression, and myriad other disasters and catastrophes, both were stricken in March 2020 by the dread COVID-19 virus. For many elderly people, especially centenarians, such a diagnosis is a death sentence. But, once again both survived, Mr. Lapschies in time to celebrate his 104th birthday.

By providing undeniable evidence of the power of the human spirit to overcome existential threats and survive,

these two remarkable human beings give us hope. We salute them, even as we salute those less fortunate, as well as the medical personnel, those who keep food available for the rest of us, and all those who are risking their lives for our safety. As has been said many times, we will get through this.

Remember, what we do now will be recorded and judged by history.



**WILLIAM LAPSCHIES**



**ADA ZANUSSO**

## DEDICATION

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This edition of the UOVHR is dedicated to all those who perish worldwide as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, to all the survivors—like Ms. Zanusso and Mr. Lapschies—and especially our health care workers, law en-

forcement & military reserve members, truck drivers, postal delivery persons, grocery store attendants, sanitation workers, and all other essential personnel, fighting on the front lines everyday during these “uncertain times.”

# LOOKING FORWARD

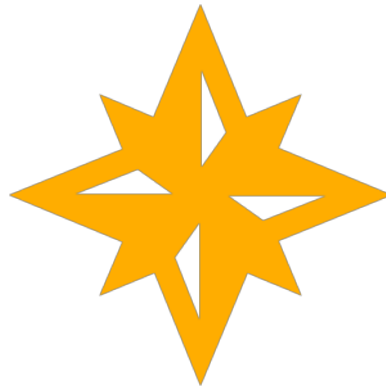
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## UOVHR VOL. 42, NO. 1:

The next issue of the **UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW** (Fall/ Winter 2020) will explore Wheeling's history through 250 objects.

It will be based on the "Wheeling in 250 Objects" exhibit that the Ohio County Public Library curated in observation of the 2019 anniversary of Wheeling's founding.

The list of objects will feature components of various archival and museum collections, as well as existing structures throughout our city, and will feature articles based on the five stars (representing Wheeling's Indigenous, Frontier, Transportation, Statehood, and Industrial eras) of Wheeling's new City flag from Hank Lutton, Dr. David Javersak, Dr. Joseph Laker, Rebekah Karelis, and Dr. William Hal Gorby.



# UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW

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Those interested in submitting an article, please contact Seán Duffy at [UOVHR@ohiocountylibrary.org](mailto:UOVHR@ohiocountylibrary.org)

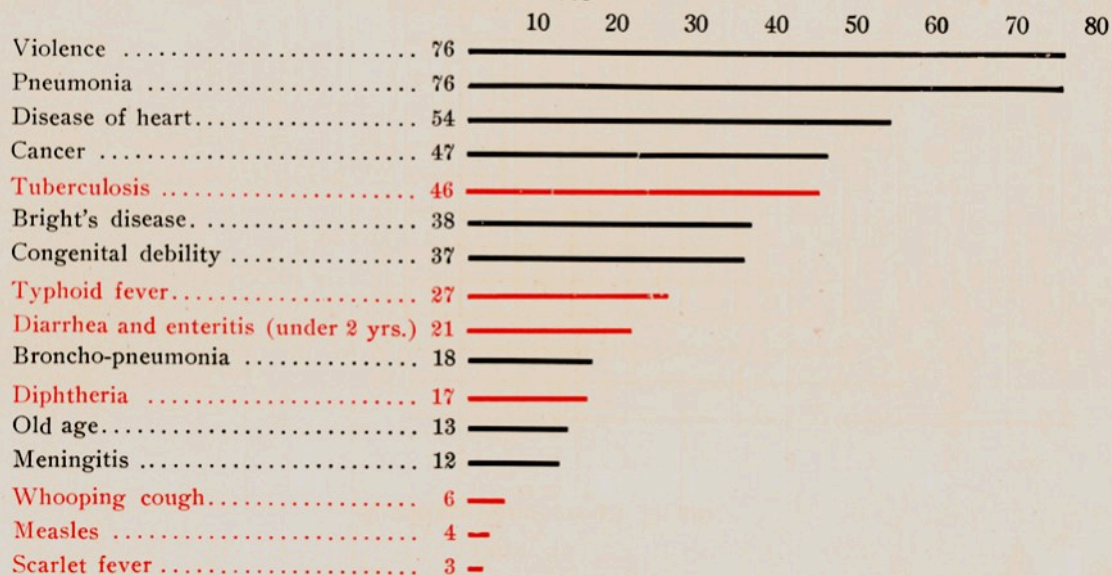
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# UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW

Ohio County Public Library  
52 — 16th Street  
Wheeling, WV 26003

Table No. 3  
**Leading Causes of Death**  
1913



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## Leading Causes of Death in the City of Wheeling, 1913

Graph from "Report of the Health Department of City of Wheeling, West Virginia,  
for the two Years ending June the thirtieth Nineteen Hundred & Thirteen"  
(Wheeling: City Health Department, 1913), OCPL.