

Spanish influenza

Pandemic of 1918 required masks, cancellations

By Gary Gisselman, Research Librarian

Historians commonly agree that the Spanish influenza most likely arrived in the United States on a troop ship arriving home from the European War in September of 1918. Within a few weeks the disease reached pandemic proportions.

By the end of September, local physicians and health officials were concerned. They warned that if Spanish influenza became an epidemic it would be necessary to close public meeting spaces, schools, and churches until the danger passed.

Only a week later numerous cases of Spanish influenza were reported locally. A survey of local schools showed that pupils were generally free from the illness, although some children had cold symptoms. Influenza cases quickly increased, however, and soon 44 cases of influenza were reported locally and one person had died of pneumonia after having influenza.

On October 10, 1918, State Health Officer C.A. Harper issued an advisory order authorizing local health departments to close all schools, churches, and theaters and to prohibit public meetings. That same day the Wausau board of health requested that meetings of lodges, fraternities, social societies, and all other assemblies be discontinued. Wisconsin was the first state to act in accordance with Surgeon General Rupert Blue's request to take drastic steps to check the spread of the Spanish influenza.

The epidemic kept spreading. On October 11, there were 80 cases locally, and soon all private and public schools were closed. As officials sought ways to slow the epidemic, they urged the wearing of gauze masks. On October 17, 1918, health officials reported that there were 427 cases of influenza in the city and 12 deaths across Marathon County due to pneumonia following influenza. Seven of those deaths were from Wausau.

Then the epidemic seemed stationary. A headline in the Wausau newspaper on Thursday, October 31, read, "Influenza cases show a decrease." This sense of a decline in cases led the health board to decide to reopen schools, churches, and bowling alleys (but not theaters). That did not last long. That Saturday the board rescinded the order of Thursday and continued the ban on schools, churches, theaters, and other entertainment

WARNING TO THE PUBLIC

Influenza is still prevalent. The number of cases occurring daily has not shown any decided decrease within the last few weeks. A recurrence of this disease in more epidemic form will result in more illness, more deaths, and will compel the city authorities to effect far greater restrictions than have even been known here before. Theaters, moving picture houses, business places, factories and other places will have to be closed unless the public ceases to be careless.

Do not bring illness nor death into your family; do not transmit this disease to your friends, but observe strictly the following rules:

1. Avoid contact with those persons having influenza. This is the chief mode of transmission.
2. Remember influenza is a serious disease, which frequently terminates in death, therefore urge patients to go to bed as soon as attacked, to call a physician without delay, to remain in bed for at least three days after temperature is normal in order to avoid pneumonia.
3. Families must keep at home, away from school, church and places of amusement, all children having illness at home. Children showing signs of illness should remain at home.
4. Families having influenza cases should isolate them and those attending them should wear masks.
5. Hands should be washed frequently and especially before taking meals, and kept away from the face.
6. Dancing and crowding in public places must not occur.
7. If you must cough, spit or sneeze use a handkerchief.

By order of
BOARD OF HEALTH.

Wausau Daily Herald December 5, 1918

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Looking ahead from a strong position



January 2021 finds us looking forward, looking up, and feeling cautiously optimistic. We have survived 2020. While in-person events were done in by COVID, and while we lost a relatively small number of members, our membership, donations, and governmental sponsorship have remained strong. Though revenues are down, expenses are down further. Virtual offerings have burgeoned, and virtual viewers are engaged. Important research carries on. MCHS remains a financially sound, vibrant organization.

Russ Wilson

Among the things we look forward to in the coming months is a special event to thank our members, volunteers, and sponsors in person for their generosity. And to those relatively few who did not renew their memberships, please don't sweat it! We want you back when and as times get better.

On a sad note for us, our talented program director, Sandy Block, will soon retire. Everyone connected with MCHS will miss Sandy's warm smile, cheerful dedication, and well-written communications. Please join me in thanking Sandy and wishing her the very best.

Russ Wilson, MCHS Board President

Welcome to our New Members

Donna Keuck
Jean English
Marissa Welch

Gifts Received

In honor of Rob & Elke Hagge from Bert & Leigh Tuckey

In memory of Robert H. Koehler from Mary Jane Hettinga

In memory of RuthAnne Jahns from Ray C. Obel

Additional donations from:

The Robert S. Hagge Foundation Fund administered by the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin

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THE WANIGAN

The Wanigan is a quarterly publication sent as a benefit to members of the Marathon County Historical Society.



The Marathon County Historical Society
is supported in part by
City of Wausau Room Tax Funding.

VALENTINE TEA

Host your own Victorian Tea with MCHS ideas

February isn't quite the same without a Historical Society Victorian Valentine Tea. That's why MCHS has compiled a web page full of ideas for people to host a tea party at home or via Zoom or another virtual platform. Our page contains tea party etiquette, menu suggestions, some easy recipes, a craft project, and other items.

It's fun to plan a fancy party, so consider using your best dishes and dressing up. You might encourage guests to wear hats and gloves to help make this a special occasion.

Choose a menu with treats everyone will enjoy. What you serve doesn't need to be a full meal, but a snack of several one- and two-bite foods.

Half the fun is the preparation, so consider sending invitations, making place cards, and providing a small party favor for each person.

More Victorian Tea information is available on our website, www.marathoncountyhistory.org.



Special treats from Sweet Dreams

Normally, MCHS orders lots of treats and nibbles from Sweet Dreams Bakery for our annual Victorian Valentine Tea. Since we aren't hosting that large gathering this year, Sweet Dreams is offering a tray of about 30 assorted Valentine goodies for \$20. Order by calling 715-842-2377.

Curbside pick-up is available on Thursday afternoon, February 11, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the parking lot. Or pick up inside the bakery during their business hours, 6 a.m. to noon Tuesday through Friday.

Sweet Dreams is located inside the Woodson History Center at 410 McIndoe Street, Wausau. Enter through the marked door at the north end of the building, off Fulton Street. (The History Center remains closed to the public.)



A LOOK BACK IN TIME

The Flood of 1912 is Postcard video topic

By Ben Clark, Archivist

Between 1911 and 1912, the rivers of Central Wisconsin flooded five or six times, often with destructive and disruptive results. And the most devastating of these floods occurred on July 23rd and 24th of 1912.

On the 23rd, most people in Wausau had gone to sleep for the evening. But they were awakened by an urgent warning of the coming flood, sent from the folks in Brokaw, where their dam was being washed away in the record swelling of the Wisconsin River. During that long and perilous night, men braved the storm to do what they could. But little could stop the coming waters, which would rise a record 11.7 feet in Wausau over a period of just over a single day.

By dawn the following day, the storm had broken and the sky had cleared somewhat, but water continued to surge dangerously all along the waterways of Central Wisconsin. From Merrill to Portage, communities along the Wisconsin River had seen bridges washed away, watched as dams broke (or came precariously close to breaking), and saw countless businesses and homes flooded—their contents ruined. Miraculously, and despite many close calls during the night, no human lives were lost to the unchecked raging of the “Old Wisconsin” river.

You would be hard pressed to find a single event or day in the history of Marathon County that was as comprehensively photographed as July 24, 1912, at least relative to the number of potential photographers at work and the time they spent capturing images. The hundreds of unique postcards, cabinet cards, photo prints, and even stereograms from that day give proof to the devastation of the 1912 Flood to this day.

Incidentally, these postcards are the subject of the most recent “Postcards from the Past” video. If you are interested in learning more about the Flood of 1912, the attempts by photographers to document the damage, and the collections of the resulting postcards that were saved by locals for decades, you can watch the video by visiting our website (marathoncountyhistory.org) or by checking our YouTube Channel.

1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic, from Page 1

places until the city physicians could make a decision on the matter. At such a meeting on November 13, the board of health decided to lift the ban and let schools, churches, theaters, and other meeting places open. The board cited a “marked decrease in new cases” in making their decision.

However, influenza cases increased in December, along with the number of deaths. The Board of Health and local physicians came to recognize the continued severity of the disease and believed extreme measures should be taken. All public meeting places were again closed. Further restrictions went into place requiring that all members of the family of any ill person be quarantined except those engaged in employment. Placards were placed on homes of quarantined people and only the health department was allowed to remove the placards. Chief of Police Malone was given the authority to enforce all quarantine restrictions. At this time there was general citizen agreement in support of the closures.

Once 1919 began, there was a gradual decline in the number of cases as well as the number of deaths. Quarantines and an active campaign on the prevention of the disease led to a gradual diminishing of Spanish influenza.



Stereogram picture shows one view of widespread damage from 1912 Flood.

VIRTUAL EVENTS

History Chats to spotlight people, maps

Weekly online History Chats will continue into the new year at 12:30 p.m. Thursdays. Each episode features a short presentation followed by time for audience questions on the topic. The following topics are planned:

February: (More) People You Should Know

February 4: Anderson Brothers
February 11: The Winner Family
February 18: John Ringle
February 25: Helen Stephenson

March: Maps

March 4: The Railroads
March 11: Plat Maps
March 18: Street Namesakes
March 25: Sanborn Maps

During April, History Chats will shine a spotlight on some of the smaller towns in Marathon County.

All History Chats are livestreamed on the Historical Society's Facebook page and YouTube channel, and recorded for later viewing.

* Longer History Speaks On the Air presentations will continue in a similar format. Topics, dates, and speakers were not available at the time of publication. Watch our website and e-newsletter for updates.



Civil War Book Club meets by Zoom in 2021

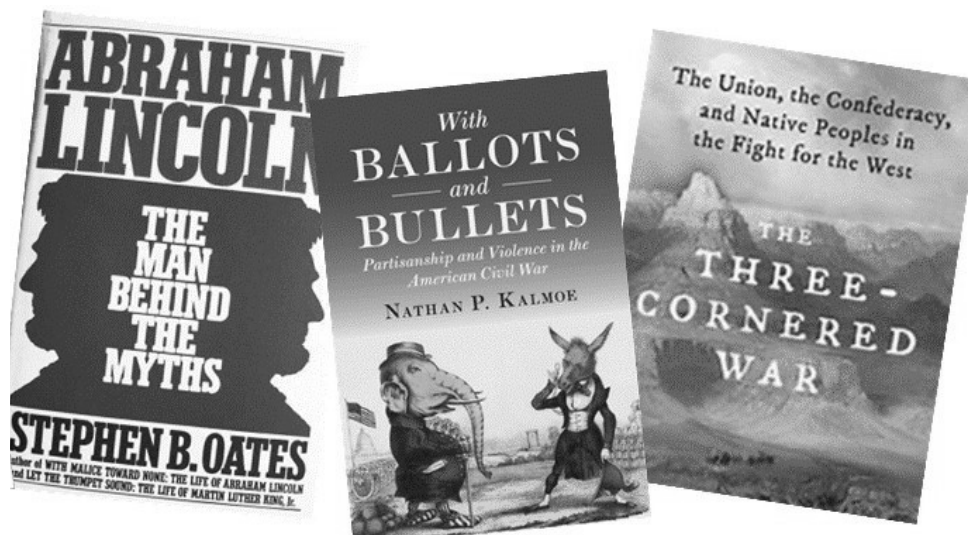
Professor Brett Barker will again present his Civil War Book Club in 2021, now virtually via Zoom. If you wish to be a part of the book club and to receive an invitation to participate please email Gary Gisselman at research@marathoncountyhistory.org.

The invitation to join the Book Club via Zoom will be sent by Professor Barker.

Future dates of the book club and the books are:

February 25: Stephen Oates, *Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths*. ISBN-10: 9780060924720 ISBN-13: 978-0060924720

March 25: Nathan Kalmoe, *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War*. ISBN-10: 1108792588 ISBN-13: 978-1108792585



April 29: Megan Kate Nelson, *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, The Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West*. Hardcover: ISBN-10: 1501152548 ISBN-13: 978-1501152542
Paperback (to be released Feb. 16, 2021): ISBN-10: 1501152556 ISBN-13: 978-1501152559

Townsend Plan predates Social Security

By Kathy Volkmann, Curator of Artifacts

Before the Social Security Act was established in 1935, the Old Age Revolving Pension Plan, or Townsend Plan, for short, was proposed by Dr. Francis Townsend. In 1933, after seeing three elderly women near his home picking through garbage for food, Townsend was compelled to devote his remaining years working for adequate pensions for the aged. He devised a plan he believed would alleviate the desperate economic circumstances the elderly experienced during the Great Depression and would stimulate a general economic recovery. While the Townsend Plan had little hope of being passed into law, it did generate momentum for the passage of the Roosevelt administration's Social Security Act in 1935.



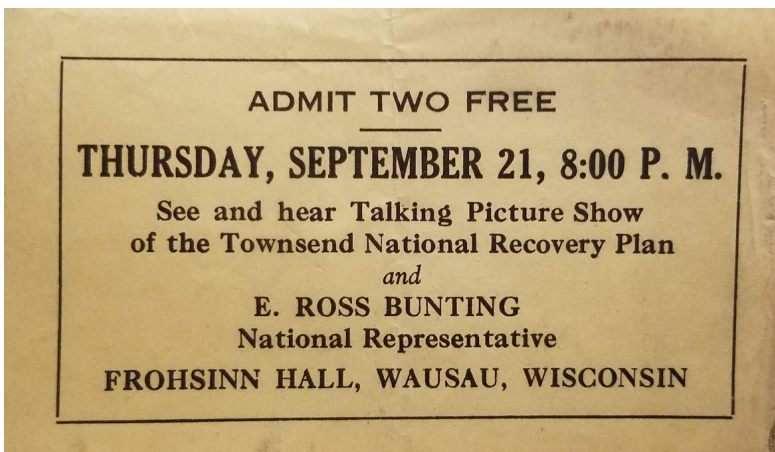
Dr. Francis Townsend

Townsend proposed that every citizen age 60 and older would receive a \$200 monthly payment from the federal government, but it came with restrictions. (1) The recipient had to be fully retired. If the pensioner had a job, they had to quit so a younger, unemployed person could take their place in the workforce. Since the \$200 monthly payment amounted to more than the average wage, this would encourage participation. (2) The person must be free from habitual criminality in their past life. (3) The money had to be spent within 30 days of receipt. This was intended to stimulate the economy by immediately returning funds to merchants and businesses, who could then produce more goods and services, and employ more people. To fund the plan, Townsend proposed a 2 percent tax on the "gross value of each business, commercial, and/or financial transaction, to be paid by the seller." No contributions were required from the pensioner and they did not need a work history to qualify.

The Townsend Plan was incredibly popular with the public and within two years there were over 7,000 "Townsend Clubs" across the country with over 2.2 million members actively working to make the Townsend Plan the nation's old-age pension system. A 1935 public opinion survey found that 56 percent of the public supported the plan.

There is some evidence that President Roosevelt was prodded to introduce his Social Security proposal to counter the growing influence of the Townsend Plan. Townsend and his followers were disappointed with Social Security because benefits were much smaller (less than one-quarter than proposed by Townsend) and recipients had to be employed to receive payments, which disadvantaged many women.

The ticket shown here allowed admittance for two people to attend a talking picture show and lecture at the Frohsinn Hall in Wausau to learn about the Townsend National Recovery Plan. Interestingly, it was found in a notebook filled with handwritten remedies for horse ailments that was kept by Charles Doerr, a well known "horse doctor" who settled in Wausau after spending much of his career in rural Marathon County. During the initial years of the Townsend Plan being promoted, Doerr would have been about 70 years old and likely would have benefited from having a stable and substantial retirement income.



Ticket allowed the holder and a guest to attend an event to learn about the Townsend plan.

Valentine's Day Trivia Match

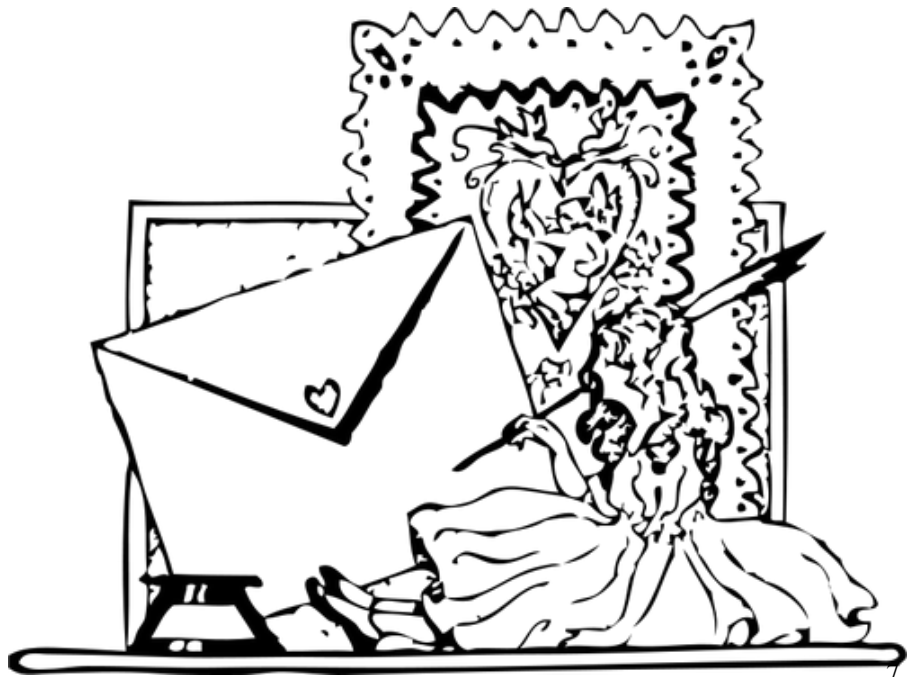


Use words below to fill in blanks at left.
Answer key is at the bottom of the page.

1. Who are Shakespeare's "Star-crossed Lovers"? _____
2. Which Patron Saint is Valentines named after? _____
3. What fruit is also known as the "love apple"? _____
4. What is the winged child called who shoots arrows at unsuspecting Valentines? _____
5. Which bird symbolizes Valentine's Day? _____
6. Who "kissed the girls and made them cry"? _____
7. What do you need to kiss to turn it into a Prince? _____
8. Who was "Victorian Lace" named after? _____
9. Where do you "wear your heart" if you are quick to show your feelings? _____
10. The Goddess of Love in Greek Mythology _____
11. The O in XOXOXOX means what? _____
12. Favorite color featured on Valentine's Day _____
13. What does the word Valentine mean? _____
14. What color rose would you give to a friend? _____
15. Something you keep flowers in _____
16. A novel dealing with love _____
17. What is the most common shape associated with Valentine's Day?

18. What is the "official" date of Valentine's Day? _____
19. You might write this to your sweetheart _____
20. A dozen red ones of these says "I Love You" _____

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| A. Romance | K. Dove |
| B. Sweetheart | L. Aphrodite |
| C. Red | M. Georgie Porgie |
| D. Roses | N. Queen Victoria |
| E. Hugs | O. Vase |
| F. Heart | P. Cupid |
| G. Frog | Q. Tomato |
| H. Yellow | R. Love Letter |
| I. February 14 | S. Saint Valentine |
| J. Sleeve | T. Romeo & Juliet |



Answer Key
 1. T - Romeo & Juliet
 2. S - Saint Valentine
 3. O - Tomato
 4. P - Cupid
 5. K - Dove
 6. M - Georgie Porgie
 7. G - Frog
 8. N - Queen Victoria
 9. J - Sleeve
 10. L - Aphrodite
 11. E - Hugs
 12. C - Red
 13. B - Sweetheart
 14. H - Yellow
 15. O - Vase
 16. A - Romance
 17. F - Heart
 18. I - February 14
 19. R - Love Letter
 20. D - Roses

Credit: Free Valentine's printable game - Romans Couple Match-Up Kids Edition (mpuprental.com)



Marathon County Historical Society
410 McIndoe Street
Wausau, Wisconsin 54403

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Your participation makes a difference!

The Marathon County Historical Society depends on memberships and other financial donations to continue our important work of preserving local history and sharing it with the community.

Becoming a member is easy! Visit our website to donate online at www.marathoncountyhistory.org/about-us/membership, or email info@marathoncountyhistory.org to have membership materials sent to you.

If you already are a member, thank you! Please consider giving a gift membership.

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MARATHON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The mission of the Marathon County Historical Society is to collect, preserve, and exhibit materials related to the history of Marathon County, and to use these materials to help people learn about North Central Wisconsin, connect with their roots, and explore their own historical connections.

WOODSON HISTORY CENTER YAWKEY HOUSE MUSEUM

410 McIndoe St., Wausau, WI 54403
Office: 715-842-5750 Library: 715-848-0378
Web site: www.marathoncountyhistory.org

***We are closed temporarily because of the COVID-19 virus,
but our website is always open!***