



NEWSLETTER

April 2020

Doña Ana County Historical Society

A Note From The DACHS President

By Dennis Daily
President

I guess it's not exactly like retirement. Since March 20 I've been working from home, as New Mexico State University like so many other businesses and institutions across the country, has had to drastically change its routines to curtail the spread of this novel coronavirus. We all hope that the current disruptions we are experiencing will achieve their aim and that we will be able to resume our normal lives in the near future. When that date will be remains a big question.

For the Doña Ana County Historical Society, the pandemic has drastically changed all our spring plans. We cancelled our March general meeting just as the seriousness of the situation was becoming known in the United States. Now, with the uncertainty of what next several weeks will bring, we have to make some decisions about the remainder of our general programs. The unfortunate scenario is that our April and May general meetings will be cancelled and we will reconvene in the fall for our wonderful, monthly speaker series.

If you are like me, you really look forward to the great presentations we sponsor seven months out of the year. The speakers highlight little-known aspects of our region's history in enlightening and engaging ways, bringing to life again people and events that have slipped into obscurity. We are greatly appreciative for all the folks who take the time to come out to educate and entertain us at the meetings.

While we take this short hiatus, and many of us are for the most part homebound, there still are many, many ways you can explore our region's fascinating and unique history. One of the best is through our own *Southern New Mexico Historical Review*. This annual jour-

nal, published for more that 25 years now, is available in its entire run online - <http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org/HistoricalReview/Reviews.html>. There is no better way to get up to speed on Doña Ana County and southern New Mexico history than by browsing the pages of our own journal.

There are many, many other online resources about southern New Mexico history freely available online. One of my favorites is the HathiTrust - <https://www.hathitrust.org/> - a cooperative project primarily with academic libraries across the county to make public domain resources widely accessible. Currently, the site has more than 17 million volumes (books, serials, government publications, etc.) digitized. Most are available for reading, downloading, printing, etc. I have found it very useful for accessing obscure reports on the Mexican-American War and the surveys that followed to establish the international boundary. Reports published both in the U.S. and in Mexico are available. Also, I'm presently reading Eugene Manlove Rhodes' wonderful New Mexico-set novel "West is West" on the site.

Of course, there are numberless other primary resources available online and I'm sure most of you have your favorites. There is no end to studying the history of southern New Mexico. Find your topic of interest, see what you can find out about it, and you can be one of presenters when we reinitiate our speaker series in the near future. In the meantime, stay safe and healthy!

Also, you might take a crack at Jim's "create a meme" effort on the back page. It may look like he has taken the good ones but I bet there are many more clever captions floating around as you pass your time at home.

Thoughts On The Influenza Pandemic A Hundred Years Ago

By Jim Eckles
Editor

When I did my research on Camp Cody, the World War I training camp at Deming, I bumped into the influenza pandemic of 1918. It affected everyone's life at the time, just like the war, but didn't get talked about much until recently. Kind of strange since it killed 675,000 Americans compared to only 55,000 dying in combat.

In 1918, medical professionals knew they had a germ-caused disease but they had no idea what a virus was - with the microscopes of the day, they couldn't see them. They kept looking for a common bacteria but, of course, never found one.

So they dealt with it as best they could using many tried and true strategies from decades past. The "ten commandments" below was published in the *Rio Grande Republic* in the fall of 1919 as health officials prepared for the second round of flu. They should look very familiar. It has been one hundred years and things haven't changed much for fighting a brand new virus. Of course, eventually we'll have a vaccine that will make a second occurrence much easier to deal with.

By the way, the *Republic* was published weekly and a subscription was \$2 per year.

If you didn't see the *Albuquerque Journal* article that the *Las Cruces Sun-News* reprinted on March 25, in 1918 New Mexico did not have a Department of Health. As a result of the 1918 outbreak, the new state established a dedicated health department.

In looking at flu related articles in New Mexico, I came across what I thought was a fairly informative and accurate article about the flu. It was in the Jan. 17, 1919 issue of the *Albuquerque Journal*. For instance, it correctly pointed out that there was no medicine or cure for influenza. It was up to your system

to defeat the illness - "nature is the only cure." The article also warned against spreading the disease to others and to take precautions like those outlined in the 10 commandments list.

Some of the advice was a little iffy. For instance, it urged those with symptoms to take a laxative as well as eating nutritious food. Also, it downplayed the flu as just another round of "grippe" which has been around for centuries.

Then, right in the middle of the article, came the commercial plug. The article had no attribution and stood on the page just like any of the other articles. But once you hit the middle, you have several paragraphs touting the benefits of Vicks VapoRub with complete instructions on how to use it.

The thing is, I vividly remember Vicks from my childhood in the 1950s. When I got sick, my mother would rub it onto my chest and then use an old cloth to wrap around my neck and chest. I could feel the warmth - from the rubbing and the VapoRub - and the smell was not unpleasant. It smelled like it was going to be helpful. And low-and-behold, I was usually cured in a day or two.

Vicks had a great thing going. All of those kids over the decades would get sick with illnesses that normally run a benign course and the company could afterward say it helped millions.

According to the ad, Vicks was a salve made from camphor and menthol with such added volatile oils like eucalyptus, thyme, cubebs (now used to add flavor to Bombay gin), etc.

The ad said that Vicks worked by being absorbed through the skin and stimulating it. The resulting blood flow to the surface of the skin was supposed to aid in relieving congestion in the lungs. Of course, the implication is that Vicks can cure you even though the article previously said only Nature could do that.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

For the Control of Influenza

1. Keep away from the sick.
2. Avoid crowds.
3. Do not use cups, glasses or towels that anyone else has used.
4. Get all of the fresh air, good food and exercise you can.
5. Wash your hands frequently.
6. Avoid the use of sprays, drugs, etc. for preventative purposes. They do no good and may do harm.
7. To protect your neighbor, cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze. Cough and sneeze toward the floor or ground.
8. If you feel sick when influenza is prevalent, go to bed and send for a doctor.
9. If you have the disease, stay in bed until entirely well. Pneumonia may result from getting up too soon.
10. Help your health officer fight the disease.

-----State Dep't of Health

More Thoughts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

We hear a lot about “social distancing” in today’s battle with Coronavirus. I went to the grocery store on April 1 and they had markers taped on the floor at the checkout stands to make sure shoppers stayed six feet from each other. In 1918, medical personnel knew the same thing but much of the time their advice was trumped by the war effort. Philadelphia has become the poster child for this. In the fall of 1918, a patriotic, war-support parade was scheduled in the city. The medical people all warned against holding it but the city’s health official was a political appointee who took his orders from other interest groups. The parade was held and 200,000 people stood along the sidewalks to watch. Ten days later a thousand people died from flu. They had something like 12,000 people die in six weeks.

Probably the biggest factor in spreading the flu in 1918, because of the lack of social distancing, was the military draft. The Army alone needed millions of men to pump into the effort to drive German troops back into their own country. There were only about 200,000 men available from National Guard units so men entered the Army through the draft.

Men were called up from every nook and cranny across the United States - from the biggest cities to men living on farms and ranches miles from the smallest of communities. These men were gathered at a number of induction points and then packed into train cars to be hauled to one of the many training camps. For many, the ride took several days. Unless you dropped down in a faint because of the flu, you went. It is easy to imagine that these train cars were petri dishes with the flu virus easily spreading from man to man as the hours dragged on.

Picacho Cemetery Donations Are Still Being Sought

The stone pillars are done and the chain has been strung to form a barrier on the street side of the Picacho Cemetery we own. Most of that was paid for using a grant from the Historical Society of New Mexico. Sally Kading, project leader, had to purchase the chain herself. That and many other expenses have led to the creation of a DACHS GoFundMe site to raise funds to finish fixing the cemetery so it can be returned to the community this year.

There is a more thorough list on the GoFundMe site. ***Please consider donating*** - it is a lot easier than digging, raking, pulling weeds and cutting out

The Army’s medical people advised against this and asked for a draft suspension until the flu died down. The generals balked saying they needed more men for the trenches so the gathering continued.

At Deming’s Camp Cody, the *Deming Headlight* was given access to the camp after Brig. Gen. James Lindsay, camp commander, said in the paper, “As to the health conditions at Camp Cody, they are excellent. Influenza is not only absolutely under control, but it is rapidly dying out.” The general also said, “The statements reported to these headquarters as having been uttered by enlisted men and civilians are absolute lies without the slightest foundation in fact.” Lindsay warned that stories about the flu killing soldiers were German propaganda and law enforcement officers were charged with arresting people making such statements.

The paper then reported on the “healthy” conditions at Camp Cody using camp hospital records: “Prior to the first arrivals of drafted men on Oct. 23, there were about 4,000 men in camp. Of those, 500 had flu, 125 developed pneumonia and 21 died.”

Not too bad, but the draftees soon arrived in mass and on Nov. 8 the paper reported there were 8,200 men in camp with 2,737 admissions to the hospital with flu. Of those, 556 developed pneumonia and 128 died. There was no follow up in the weeks that followed to see if there were additional deaths. The war ended on the 11th and so did the flu.

Another perspective on the 1918-19 flu pandemic vs. WWI is from New Mexico. About 200 New Mexican died in combat in the war. In the same time frame, between 4,000 and 5,000 New Mexicans died from the flu.

mesquite. To donate, you can simply go to GoFundMe.com on the web. At the top left is a search function. You can get to the DACHS fund by entering “Sally Kading” or “Dona Ana County Historical Society.” The fund indicates the goal and also how much has been donated so far. As of April 1, we have a long way to go.

Some of this money will go for a plaque that will be placed at the cemetery. It will provide a little background history of the cemetery and list all of the names of people known to be buried there. Interestingly, there are lots of children there - why?

Caption This.....

The April meme contest using another Library of Congress photo - just like last month. As you can see I've already staked my claim to one obvious caption. Just email the text of your submission to me at:

nebraska1950@comcast.net.



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www.donaanacountyhistoricalsociety.org

Dona Ana County Historical Society
P.O. Box 16045
Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045

