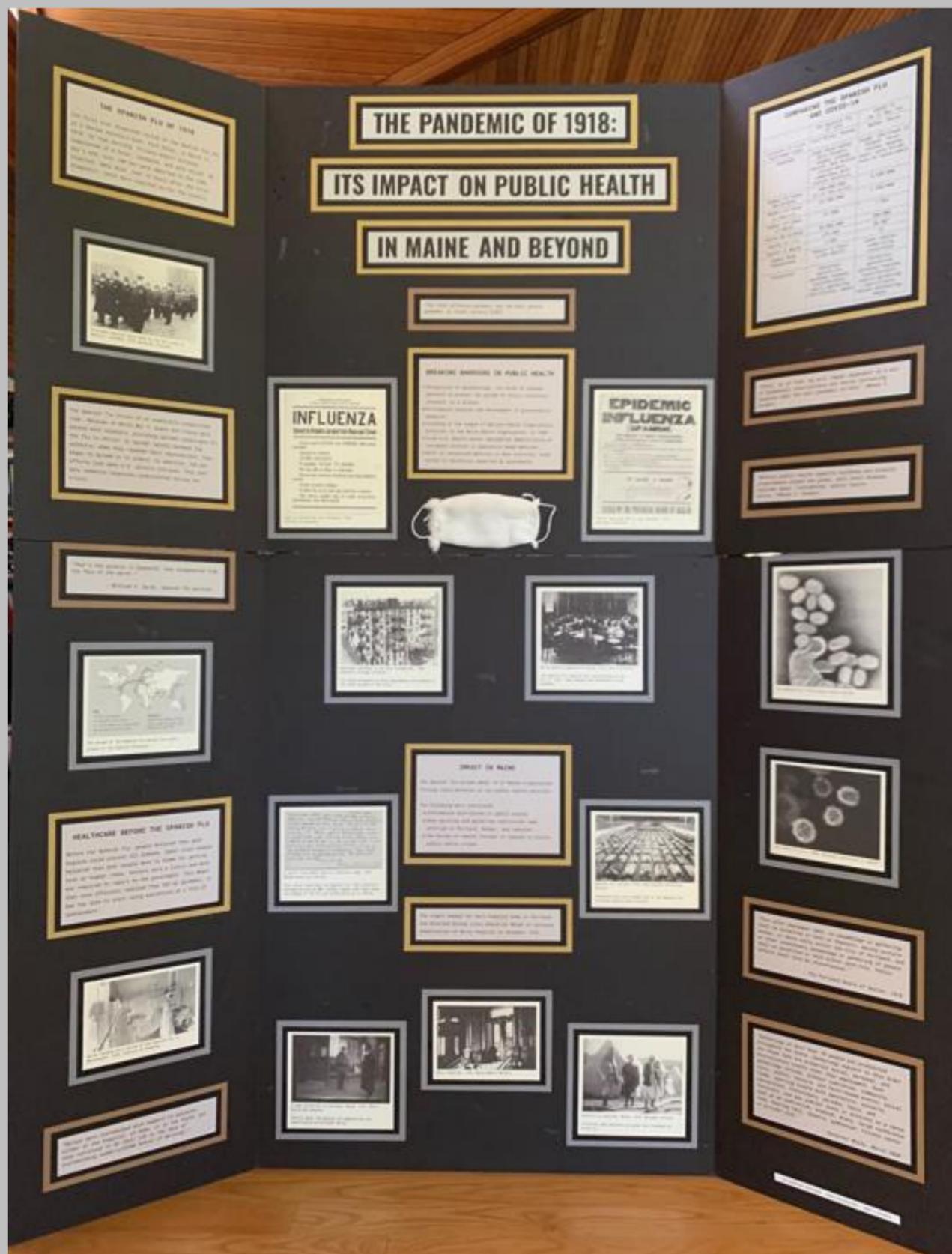


# The Pandemic of 1918: Its Impact on Public Health in Maine and Beyond

The original design and layout of the exhibit was on a standard black tri-fold board.

**Thesis/Historical Argument:** The Spanish flu of 1918 dramatically affected the way we view pandemics and broke barriers in forming public health policies at both local and global levels.



# Left Panel Top



Policemen wearing masks made by the Red Cross in Seattle, December 1918, National Archives

## The Spanish Flu of 1918

The first ever diagnosed victim of the Spanish flu was at a Kansas military base, Fort Riley, on March 11, 1918. On that morning, Private Albert Gitchell complained of a fever, headache, and sore throat. By day's end, over 100 men were admitted to the camp hospital; many died. Just 12 hours after the first diagnosis, cases were reported across the country.

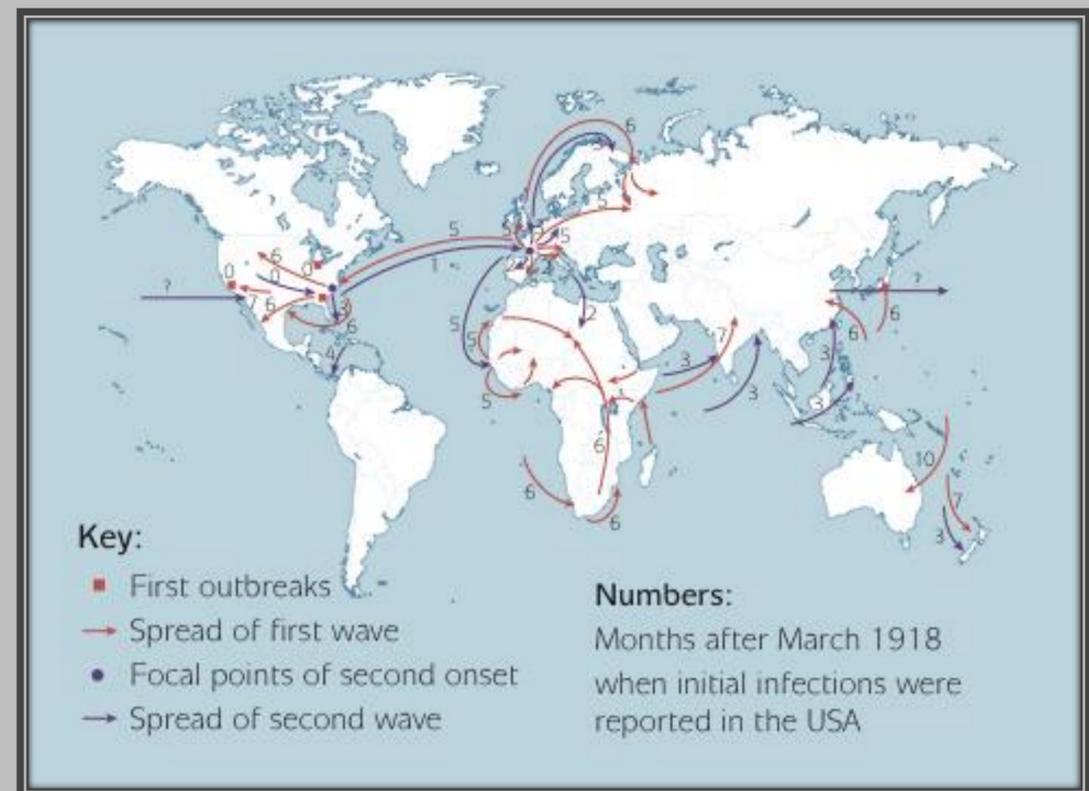
# Left Panel Center

The Spanish flu struck at an especially inopportune time. Because of World War I, boats and trains were packed with soldiers, providing optimal conditions for the flu to thrive. It spread rapidly between the soldiers; when they reached their destinations, they began to spread it to others. In addition, the war efforts took many U.S. doctors overseas. This left many domestic hospitals understaffed during the crisis.

*“That’s how quickly it happened; they disappeared from the face of the earth.”*

*- William H. Sardo, Spanish flu survivor*

The spread of the Spanish flu across the globe,  
Origin of the Spanish Influenza



# Left Panel Bottom

## Healthcare Before the Spanish Flu

Before the Spanish flu, people believed that good hygiene could prevent all disease. Upper class people believed that poor people were to blame for getting sick at higher rates. Doctors were a luxury and were not required to report to the government. This meant that once officials realized they had an epidemic, it was too late to start using quarantine as a form of containment.



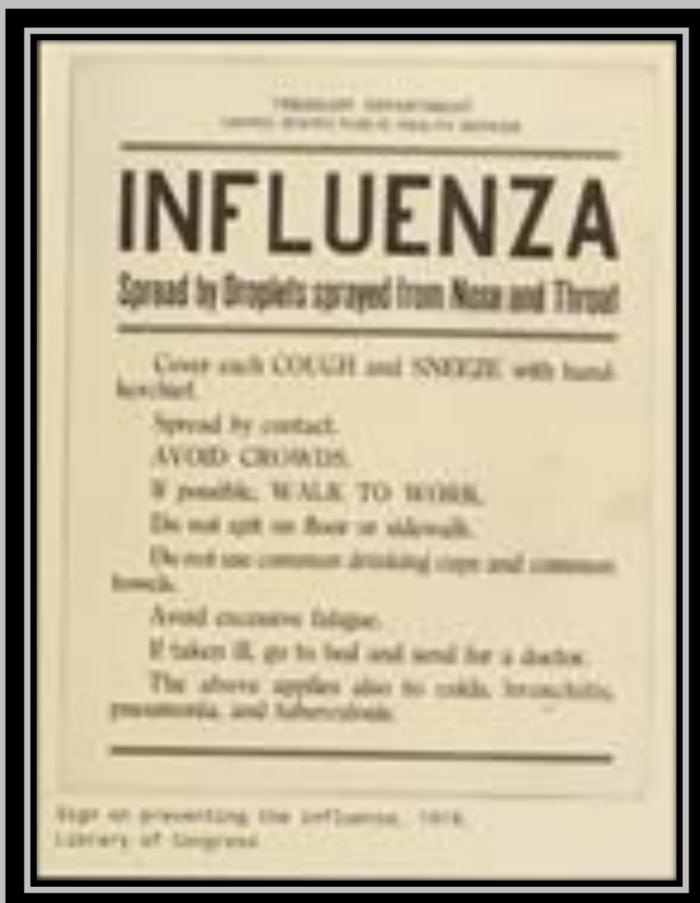
*“Nurses were overwhelmed with numbers of patients, either at the hospital, at home, or in the field, yet they continued to do their job in the face of overwhelming numbers”  
(UPENN School of Nursing).*

# Center Panel Top

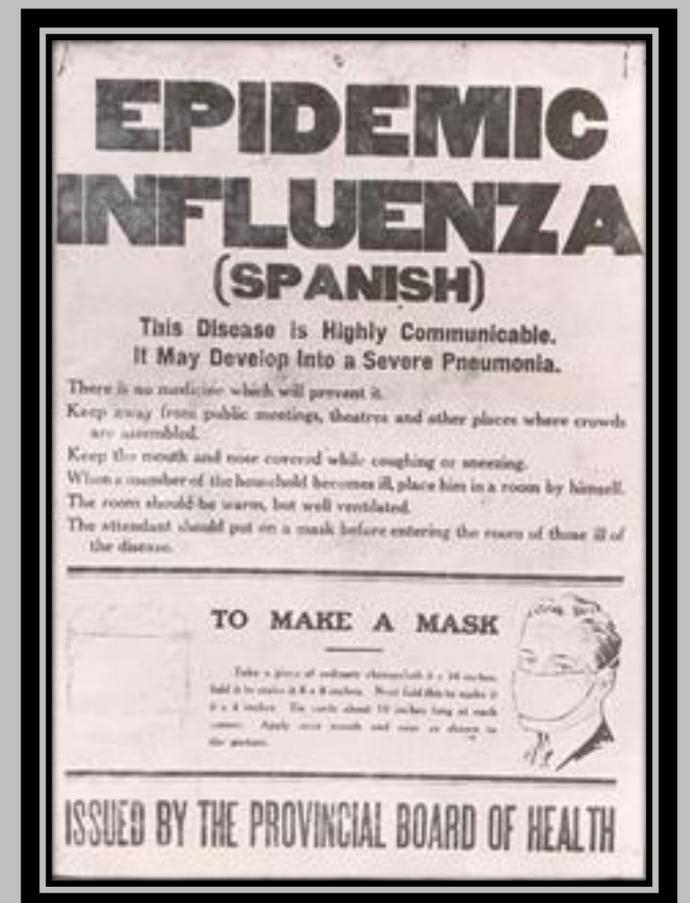
*“The 1918 influenza pandemic was the most severe pandemic in recent history” (CDC).*

## Breaking Barriers in Public Health

- Recognition of epidemiology, the study of disease patterns to prevent the spread of future infectious diseases, as a science
- Virological analyses and development of preventative measures
- Founding of the League of Nations Health Organization, precursor to the World Health Organization, in 1920
- First U.S. health census implemented demonstrating an increased interest in population based medicine
- Shift to socialized medicine in many countries; wider access to healthcare supported by governments

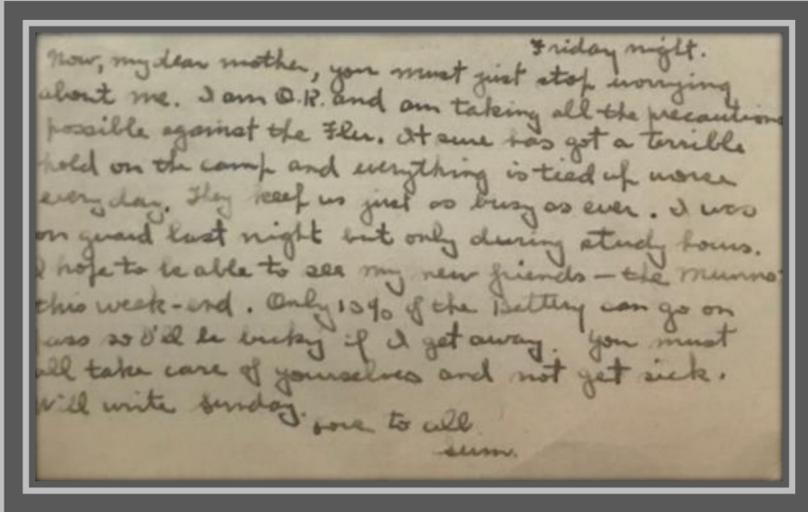


Sign on preventing the influenza, 1918, Library of Congress



Poster advising how to stay healthy, 1918, National Archives

# Center Panel Center



A letter from Sumner Cob at a military camp, 1918, Maine Historical Society  
This letter describes the Spanish flu from a military perspective during WWI. Soldier Sumner Cob talks about the damage of the flu and precautions he is taking.

World Health Organization board, 1925, W.H.O Archives

The Spanish flu inspired the installation of the W.H.O.. Here, they discuss the aftermath of the pandemic.



Apartment building in the East Village NYC, 1906,  
Greenwich Village Archives

The close proximity of early apartments contributed to the rapid spread of the virus.



Mercy Hospital, 1930, Maine Memory Network

## Impact in Maine

The Spanish flu killed about 1% of Maine's population forcing rapid advances in its public health policies.

### The following were instituted:

- Information distributed in public places
- Anti-spitting and gathering restriction laws enforced in Portland, Bangor, and Lewiston
- The Bureau of Health founded to respond to future public health crises.

The urgent demand for more hospital beds in Portland led Reverend Bishop Louis Sebastian Walsh to initiate construction of Mercy Hospital in December 1918.

# Center Panel Bottom



Soldiers in Lawrence, Maine, 1918, Bettman Archives  
Influenza camp patients are given the treatment of fresh air.



A news storefront in Portland, Maine, 1918, Maine Historical Society  
Posters about the Spanish flu demonstrate its significance in Portland, Maine.



Spanish flu victims, 1918, New England Historical Society  
Hospitals were overcrowded due to the Spanish flu; overflow centers were erected.

# Right Panel Top

## Comparing the Spanish Flu and COVID-19

	The Spanish flu of 1918	COVID-19 (As of May 15)
Location of First Confirmed Cases	Fort Riley, Kansas	Wuhan, China
Symptoms	High fever, aches, sore throats, coughs, bloody sputum, and bluish tinted skin, sometimes with purple blisters	Cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste/smell
Number of Cases World-Wide	500,000,000 (1/3 of the world)	4,400,000
Number of Cases in the U.S.	29,400,000	1,450,000
Number of Cases in Maine	47,000	1,565
Deaths World-Wide	50,000,000	304,000
Deaths in U.S.	675,000	86,607
Deaths in Maine	5,000	69
Higher Risk Populations	People in their prime health	Older adults, underlying conditions
Prevention	Isolation, quarantine, personal hygiene, disinfectants, public gathering restrictions, masks	Isolation, quarantine, personal hygiene, disinfectants, public gathering restrictions, social distancing, masks

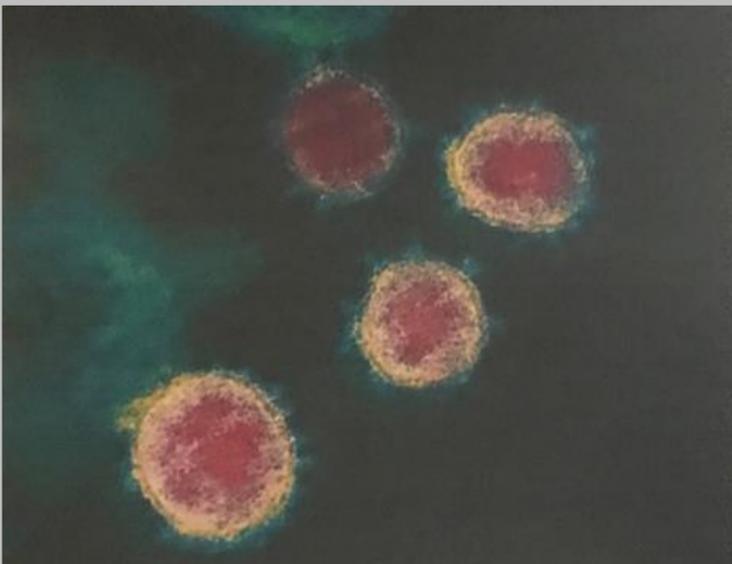
Comparison of totals as of May 15, 2020, Worldmeter

***“Still, as in 1918, we will remain dependent on a mix of biomedical interventions and social distancing measures when the next pandemic strikes” (Wendy E. Parmet).***

# Right Panel Center



The Spanish Flu, 1918, Science Photo Library



The COVID-19 virus, 2020, National Institutes of Health

*“Without public health capacity building and disaster preparedness around the globe, each novel disease outbreak means ‘reinventing’ public health policy.”  
(Wendy E. Parmet).*

# Right Panel Bottom

*“That after September 28th, no assemblage or gathering shall be permitted or held in theaters, moving picture houses, or dance halls within the City of Portland, and no other unnecessary assemblage or gathering of people shall be permitted or held within said City. Public schools shall also be discontinued.”*

*The Portland Board of Health, 1918*

*“Gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited throughout the State. Gatherings subject to this Order are those that are primarily social, personal, and discretionary events other than employment. Such gatherings include, without limitation, community, civic, public, leisure, and faith-based events; social clubs; sporting events with spectators; concerts, conventions, fundraisers, parades, fairs, and festivals; and any similar event or activity in a venue such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theatre, gymnasium, fitness center or private club.”*

*Governor Mills, March 2020*