

1918-1920 Influenza Thematically

This document offers a more complete summary of the research done by Lea Winston, Sasha Mothershead, and KatieRose Kimball in coordination with the Northfield Historical Society in the fall of 2020. The document is organized beneath various questions or topics that were the focus of our research or that we thought future researchers would benefit from knowing.

All direct quotes are cited or referenced from either the Northfield Independent, Northfield News, Manitou Messenger, Carletonia, Rice County death records, Northfield History Collaborative, Manitou Analecta, or other documents stored at the Northfield Historical Society. Some sections, like “Names for the flu?” are summarizations of all of the research we did. Some statements, like broad summaries of what residents were feeling, are claims we decided were supported by multiple pieces of publications or broad vibes of publications over weeks or months that we may not cite individually.

To see the condensed timeline we assembled from our research, [click here](#).

Please note that the [Northfield News](#), [Manitou Messenger](#), [Carletonia](#), and [Northfield History Collaborative](#) are accessible online by any user. To see a collection of all of our notes and access pdfs of some sources otherwise only available physically, [click here](#).

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1. Names for the flu? What was it referred to as?

flu, influenza, the Influenza, “flu”, Spanish influenza, influenza-pneumonia, pneumonia, illness, the awful pestilence, the “awful flu”

2. Other “vocabulary” relevant to the subject and time period

Ban: The restrictions put in place by the Northfield City Council to prevent the spread of the influenza were referred to as a “ban,” as several activities and public spaces were closed or only allowed to open if following specific rules set out by the city.

Quarantine:

The voluntary quarantine implemented by the colleges, as summarized by Gertrude Hilleboe, “meant that no one from the outside was permitted to come to the campus, no parents or friends, and that no student was allowed to go off-campus or beyond his place of residence if he lived off-campus. For any exception, which had to be a real emergency, a pass had to be secured. The cooperation of the students in maintaining this quarantine was simply superb.” ([Manitou Analecta by Gertrude Hilleboe, 36](#))

S.A.T.C. :

As summarized by the Manitou Messenger, “The War Department has provided that units of the Students' Army Training Corps shall be established at the Various schools and colleges. The general purpose of the plan is to enable college students of draft age to remain in college and at the same time to receive military instruction under U. S. Army officers. The plan has two objects in view: (1) To offer to the young citizen an acceptable outlet for his patriotic zeal. (2) To check premature enlistment for active service by combining military drill and instruction with the college curriculum, and thus provide for trained leaders and specialists who both during and after the war may meet efficiently the nation's needs.” ([October 15, 1918](#) publication in the Manitou Messenger)

3. How and when did people learn of the flu?

At the latest, Northfield was aware of the influenza epidemic by the start of the St. Olaf school year at the end of September in 1918. More broadly, the United States army was quarantining mid-September, and many Northfield residents learned about the influenza from letters from family members around the country and boys in army camps around the United States where influenza was rampant ([this video](#) gives two example letters at around 08:30. The letter from Frederick on [September 28th](#) is digitally archived by the [Northfield Historical Collective](#)).

Before the influenza came to Northfield, residents were warned to be cautious and were educated about the disease. In the [Oct. 11th issue](#) of the *Northfield News*, there is a republished article from the *Minneapolis Journal* explaining the influenza. It discusses the difference between the influenza and the grip, lists symptoms, and dispels the idea that it originated in Spain. Instead, the article places blame on the Germans, claiming “It is fairly certain that the Spanish influenza, if different from the familiar grip, originated in the German camps.”

An influenza bulletin published in the [October 25th issue](#) of the *Northfield News* listed advice to avoid sickness, such as “wash your hands before each meal.” The last piece of advice is “DON’T WORRY,” in a clear attempt to calm concerns over the disease.

In the same issue of the *Northfield News*, an article entitled [“Uncle Sam’s Advice on the Flu”](#) explained what the influenza is and its origins. “Although the present epidemic is called ‘Spanish influenza,’ there is no reason to believe that it originated in Spain,” the article reads. The article includes a Q&A with Surgeon General Rupert Blue of the US Public Health Service, who explains how to recognize and treat influenza, how it is spread, and how to guard against it.

4. What was the official response?

a. at a City level?

On [October 10th, 1918](#), the Northfield City Council held a special meeting to discuss the influenza, which had not yet reached Northfield but was spreading in nearby counties and towns. The City Council decided to close the Grand theater, churches, public schools, pool halls, community meetings, and the community club. A week later, the public schools and churches reopened, as there were still no cases of influenza in Northfield, however a sign on the high school read “No visitors allowed, use telephone.” City officials warned Northfield residents to be cautious and avoid travel. The [Northfield News](#) reported “With Northfield still free from the influenza epidemic, members of the city’s board of health appeal to the public to cooperate in preventing its introduction here by the one bethod that is sure to bring it, namely from outside sources” (Oct. 25, 1918).

On November 1st, 1918, the Minnesota State Board of Health forbade public funerals ([Northfield News](#)). On November 11th 1918, the same day armistice was called for WWI, Northfield shut down again and created an Influenza Advisory Committee that instituted an Influenza Ban, as several cases of influenza had now appeared in the Northfield community. The ban went into effect on November 12th, prohibiting all public gatherings, and closing the schools, Grand theater, all churches, the public library, all lodges and secret organizations, and the Community club rooms. Restaurants and lunch rooms could operate if they stopped serving soft drinks, soda water and ice cream. Barber shops were only allowed to remove hair on the top of the head, as long as barbers wore a mask, elimited the lounging chairs, and used a ticket system to spread out the flow of customers. The number of people allowed in stores was determined based on square

footage, with six people prescribed to each two hundred square feet of floor space (*Northfield News*, [Nov. 15, 1918](#)).

The Red Cross quickly went to work to help stop the spread and care for the sick. They formed committees to address the crisis, and worked out of the Northfield High School gym to make masks and other supplies. The Red Cross also helped institute a survey of the city to count the number of influenza cases ([Nov. 15, 1918 Northfield News](#)).

By late November of 1918, the situation was improving. However, the Advisory Committee waited until December 5th to modify the ban. Under the new regulations, the public library was opened for exchange of books but not for reading, small meetings were allowed in churches but regular Sunday services were not allowed, the restrictions on the businesses were removed, and the ban on lodges, clubs and secret societies were lifted if they congregated in small groups. The Grand, pool and billiard rooms were still closed. It was decided that schools would not be opened until after Christmas. The Board of Health and Advisory Committee again articulated the importance of observing the quarantine restrictions:

“The committee wishes for it to be understood that the citizens of Northfield are still expected to observe the spirit of caution which has been expressed in the previous provisions as to loitering in public places or allowing children to loiter on the streets. It is suggested that shopping be done during the morning hours by more people in order that there be no congestion in the stores” (*Northfield News*, [Dec. 6, 1918](#))

By [December 13th, 1918](#), the Advisory Committee and Board of Health had met again but decided to keep the modified ban in place despite the low number of cases in Northfield. The *Northfield News* reported, “While it was pointed out that the city itself is practically cleared of the disease, other cities are experiencing a return of the influenza, and the board feared that a removal of the ban at this time might give a larger opportunity for a firm hold, should another epidemic come to Northfield.”

On December 30th, 1918 the public schools opened and on the 31st the Influenza Ban was lifted. The *Northfield News* reported that “Northfield is conservative and after noting the experience in other cities, where the lifting of the ban too soon invariably brought a recurrence of the disease, local authorities have adopted the policy of playing safe.” Now that the ban was lifted, they emphasized “common sense on the part of the public will do much to prevent the return of influenza.”

In January of 1919, the *Northfield News* reported that an inoculation against pneumonia and influenza had been proven effective, despite initial doubts by Northfield physicians:

“Northfield physicians, as well as a majority in the profession throughout the country, have been slow to recommend the inoculation, feeling while that there seems to be excellent results obtained in instances where it had been tried out, there might be the idea of personal profit attached to the process of administering the vaccine on the part of the public. While there is even now no attempt to advertise the serum, the physicians unanimously agreed that it is proving very satisfactory” ([Jan. 24, 1919](#)).

After the winter, summer and fall of 1919 with few influenza cases, influenza re-appeared in the winter of 1920. By February, the situation was dire enough to warrant city action. In an article entitled “Serious “Flu” Situation Met By Prompt Action,” the *Northfield News* reported:

“The fact that the situation had really become serous [sic] came like a thunderclap Saturday evening when the news spread verbally that schools, churches and all public gatherings had been ordered closed by the Board of Health” ([Feb. 6, 1919](#))

As before, the Red Cross appointed committees, recruited volunteers, and worked to help the sick ([Feb. 13, 1919](#)). By late February, the situation had improved enough that the ban was lifted.

b. by the Red Cross/hospitals?

The Red Cross was heavily involved in Northfield’s response effort. The women involved made masks and acted as volunteer nurses to sick residents. Many Red Cross volunteers got sick as a result. Red Cross Auxiliaries were active on both college campuses, with volunteers (mostly women) working to raise funds and sew influenza masks (for example, [Nov. 15, 1918 Northfield News](#)).

c. by the colleges?

Over the course of the epidemic, St. Olaf fared worse in terms of student deaths and cases, as compared to Carleton. Though our research did not reveal exactly *why* this discrepancy occurred, the differences between campus outbreaks is notable. St. Olaf, for instance, lost 5 students between 1918 and 1920 with four S.A.T.C. students lost in the fall of 1918 and a freshman lost in 1920. St. Olaf reported that in 1920, “less than six per cent of the entire student body” were sick ([Feb. 10, 1920, MM](#)). For comparison, Carleton College recorded no deaths and no cases of influenza among the female students on campus. Carleton’s most prominent death was that of Professor Fred B. Hill in January of 1919. Reflecting on these differences, the *Carletonian* expressed sympathy toward the situation of their “sister college” in a letter published [November 16 of 1918](#):

“The fact that St. Olaf has suffered losses among her students in the epidemic now scourging our country is Indeed a deep-felt sorrow to Carleton. Our sister college across the Cannon has been far more unfortunate than we and we extend to her our constant sympathy in these tense days of combined grief and fear. We are watching the situation on the hill-top with an intense interest and a controlling anxiety that need no longer be applied to our own swiftly improving condition. Kindred adversities are ever passages for mutual understanding, for closer bonds of relationship. Thus we seem drawn toward the stricken community of St. Olaf in daily thought. And among us is the spirit of love and sympathy for a suffering college which might have been our own. Truly, we may give unlimited thanks for our own preservation in this week of Thanksgiving. Yet we must not forget that while we are fortunate, others very near to us have been unfortunate. And our joy, otherwise perfect, is tempered by the realization of their sadness.”

In terms of responses: both St. Olaf and Carleton implemented quarantine measures and treated sick students. However, there were minor differences in how the Colleges responded to the pandemic.

At St. Olaf, Red Cross courses were offered in the fall of 1918 ([Manitou Messenger, Oct. 15, 1918](#)). Although this course was originally in response to World War I efforts, it became important as the influenza progressed. In early October, St. Olaf students were put under quarantine, meaning that they were encouraged to avoid public gatherings ([Oct. 15, 1918, MM](#)). A more strict quarantine was enforced for those who were sick; this mostly included S.A.T.C. men who were taken to the chapel basement which had been converted into a temporary hospital ([Manitou Analecta, p. 36-38](#)). Within one week of November, four of these S.A.T.C. students died, bringing the grief close to home for many St. Olaf students ([Dec. 10, 1918, MM](#)). When the epidemic spread to the female students of the college at the beginning of December, the faculty decided to close the college and send the students home for break more than a week early ([Dec. 10, 1918, MM](#)). In the beginning of 1919, much of the college activities returned to normal, although the final exams for the first semester were canceled ([Jan. 21, 1919, MM](#)). The [Northfield News](#) reported that the temporary quarantine instituted when students returned after break in winter of 1919 “have been successful in so far that no cases of influenza have developed” and that “the customary life of campus is rapidly getting back to normal.” Over this winter outbreak, St. Olaf experienced four student deaths and around a hundred cases of influenza.

Carleton College took similar precautions. Beginning in October of 1918, members of the S.A.T.C. (which included almost all male students on campus) and female students were placed under separate quarantines. Attitude on campus was that this was merely a preventative measure, the *Carletonian* writing in [an Oct. 22, 1918 article](#) that “there is no epidemic at Carleton.” However the first-on campus cases appeared among S.A.T.C. men in November and a stricter

quarantine was enacted. Under these new protocols, Carleton students were prohibited from leaving campus, several scheduled events were postponed (including a highly anticipated visit of several prominent British educators), and all S.A.T.C. men were confined to their barracks -- unable to attend classes or religious services. During the months of November and December of 1918, Carleton quarantined over seventy men with influenza in the Sayles-Hill gymnasium. These men were attended to by a doctor and were entertained by several guest lecturers (mostly Professors on campus). Unlike St. Olaf, Carleton finished its fall term of 1918 as initially scheduled, and both campuses welcomed students back in January of 1919 with some lingering flu precautions. An editor of the *Carletonian* expressed dismay at the continuation of these rules -- complaining that *“to have poked in your face at the very doors of Gridley, an official document of “Flu” regulations, Well! It doesn't start the New Year out right—that's all!”* -- but since no new cases appeared among returning students, campus life soon returned to normal ([Jan 14, 1919, Carletonian](#)).

When the epidemic re-emerged in February of 1920, Carleton students volunteered at the overwhelmed Northfield hospitals. Though it is unclear if Carleton reinstated a full campus quarantine, an article in the [February 17, 1920 edition](#) of the *Carletonian* mentions the cancellation of a piano recital because “two hundred holders of tickets residing in Northfield would not [have been] permitted to attend.” This might indicate possible renewed restrictions on movement between campus and town.

Similarly, the Manitou Messenger reports no explicit official responses to the new emergence of the epidemic in 1920. The focus is on condolences to those grieving the deaths of people due to influenza, advising people on how to stay healthy, or applauding the students organizing to fight the flu. The following article sums up one persons' impression of the situation.

“St. Olaf is again threatened by the old enemy, the flu. What the ultimate consequences will be no man can know. Some students are manifesting considerable anxiety, others are keeping cool and look upon the onslaught of the epidemic with seeming indifference. Viewed from the standpoint of pure reason the danger is almost negligible if every person will exercise caution and care in keeping himself in a healthy condition. A healthy system can defy any flu germ that ever dared climb Manitou Heights. A man that "keeps his head cool and his feet warm" will have nothing to worry about. At any rate worry is dangerous. The flu germ seeks out the person that worries. The one who is afraid of catching the disease will be the first to catch it. So while the flu lasts exercise care and keep cool.” ([Feb. 3, 1920, MM](#))

5. What did Northfielders think about it?

a. How did they talk about it before it came to northfield (October of 1918)

It seems that the first public shutdown on October 10th, 1918 was met with little resistance from the Northfield community, who appreciated the caution of the City Council. The [Northfield News](#) reported “While few cases of Spanish influenza, so-called, have been reported in Northfield, the authorities are being commended for taking the precautionary measures and the people are not only willing to fall in line, but are volunteering to cooperate.”

Popular sentiment was that each individual had to make some sacrifices for the common good, as reported in the [Northfield News](#):

“The only way in which the disease can be introduced in Northfield is from outside sources. Do your part in discouraging travel and the visits of guests and this city may be spared the loss of several lives. The responsibility rests with every individual, not with the officials temporarily in charge of safeguarding the public health.”

In early October, before cases appeared on campus, the *Carletonian* downplayed the threat of the disease, insisting that “there is no epidemic at Carleton.” Instead, newly instated quarantine rules were viewed as a protective measure - keeping the students safe from “outside sources of disease” ([Oct. 22, 1918](#)).

Even Northfielders outside of Carleton, like Fredrick Heiberg who was training at an army camp in Indiana, indicated a confidence in those in authority and the structures around him to keep the camp healthy:

“the whole camp is quarrentined because of the Spanish Influenza which you have read about, no doubt. Now don't think we're all half dead because this is done as a precautionary measure mostly. The disease is mostly fever but as far as I know there are no serious cases in camp... If the guards hear anybody cough they are rustled over to the doctor at once and if the person shows any other symptom of the disease they are put in the hospital. Don't worry about us because I've never felt more pepery in my life and perchance I should get it I'd get the best of care. [sic]” ([September 28, 1918, Northfield Historical Collective](#)).

b. Fall-Winter 1918-1919 (when it ‘hit home’)

In October of 1918, the first ban was instituted, with mixed results from the public. The [October 17th issue](#) of the *Northfield Independent* explains how WWI prepared Northfield residents for the new quarantine restrictions: “The slashing methods of war time have now become so general

that the closing of all public meetings, theaters, churches, and schools, last week was taken as a matter of course and caused very little disturbance in the state of public mind.”

The [Independent](#) also reported on October 17th that this initial ban “has the hearty support of the people of the city who realize that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of care, and that no step is too drastic to aid in the fight which this country is making to stamp out the influenza epidemic.”

The [October 25th issue](#) of the *Northfield News*, however, indicates that some were discontented with this initial ban, as “These precautions have caused some inconveniences to many, have been the cause of much dissatisfaction to a few, and to the members of the council who have been appealed to repeatedly for relief in some particular case have proved rather embarrassing.”

Throughout the fall of 1918, there was much emphasis placed on the importance of obeying quarantine. The [Nov. 15th](#) issue of the *Northfield News* reported:

“In epidemic times the most difficult cult phase of the situation is to enforce a quarantine. There are always people who will violate the confidence reposed in them. Make it as unpopular to break quarantine as to refuse to buy a Liberty bond. Report every person violating his word of honor to the local health authorities and if necessary, go into court and testify to the facts. With the war won let’s all form a voluntary society pledged to forcing the absolute obeying of all laws of the country.”

Also on [November 15th](#), the *Northfield News* reported that the students at the Northfield school seem indifferent to the schools’ closure: “The schools have been closed again for an indefinite period because of the influenza epidemic. This news was received in a surprisingly indifferent manner by the students but no one seems to regret it very much.”

At St. Olaf, the Manitou Messenger spins the worst of the outbreak during November 1918 with upbeat vocabulary that would have been familiar from WWI stories:

“As was to be expected the influenza finally reached St. Olaf on Nov. 12, the first cases breaking out in the S. A. T. C...The sick boys were at once taken to the hospital where the best of care was given them....No effort or expense was spared during the epidemic. Everyone joined nobly in one big effort to suppress the disease. The girls who had taken the course in Home Nursing last year cheerfully offered their aid.” ([December 10, 1918, MM](#))

In mid-November, there was much sadness over the death of Mrs. Herman Roe, a beloved community member. The *Northfield News* wrote “The employees of the News, upon whom has

developed the work of issuing this week's paper, have only the kindest remembrance of her graciousness, and join with the community in extending to the bereaved ones their heartfelt sympathy in these dark hours." In the same issue of the [Northfield News](#), an article entitled "Obey the Ban" again stressed the importance of following precautionary measures:

"No one relished having his actions or his business placed under a ban or even restricted to a limited extent. But these are times when the situation is really dangerous unless some restrictions are placed upon the interminglings of people in social and business intercourse Every sane person realizes that the value of every life is priceless, and any measure which tends to safeguard life is not to be considered from a personal or a selfish viewpoint The community as a unit must enter into the fight against the spread of the disease with a spirit of willingness, and co-operate with the authorities in any manner they made decide is necessary. Report promptly any sickness to your doctor, and obey his orders without question."

In [December of 1919](#), with the situation little improved, the *Northfield News* reported that "the general sentiment is against removing the restrictions any further," as there were a number of new cases in Northfield.

By January of 1919, there was a level of hopeless apathy expressed by students at St. Olaf. This attitude is exemplified by an article on January 21st in the *Manitou Messenger* titled, "[So Why Worry.](#)" which begins by saying, "*Either you are exposed to the flu or you are not. If not, you have nothing to worry about.*" then goes on to explain all the experiences of the flu after which you will ultimately be fine, and ends by saying, "*If you recover, you have nothing to worry about. If you do not, and have followed this advice clear through, you have done with worry forever.*" This dark humor reflects a lack of control among the students.

Carleton students express similar frustration with the continuing presence of the disease. One student, in the [January 14th](#) edition of the *Carletonian*, asks: "*What if you could greet Susie, your best chum, only from afar, after you have been parted for three whole weeks? What if you couldn't see your Senior crush except from opposite ends of the dining room? And what if you, who had lived for a week on the hope of seeing your favorite hero, in the movies, had to miss even that because of "Flu" bans?*" At the same time, sports teams at both colleges had begun to play games again.

In January of 1919 the town expressed excitement at the lifting of the ban, but the threat of the disease did not fully disappear. In an article in the [Northfield Independent](#), members of the Special Health Committee urged citizens to take personal responsibility for their health, writing that despite the end of formal restrictions:

“future spread of the disease should be carefully guarded against by each individual. Each should feel personally responsible to prevent the spread of the “flu” by avoiding places where the disease is present.” ([Jan 2, 1919, Northfield Independent](#)).

The death of Carleton professor Fred B. Hill on January 29th, 1919 was a large blow to the Northfield community. The [Northfield News](#) reported “Nothing has thrown a pall over the entire community in many a day as the sad news which spread rapidly Wednesday evening that Fred Hill was dead, a victim of the dread and treacherous influenza-pneumonia.” When the news of Mr. Hill’s death was announced during a basketball game between St. Olaf and Carleton, the game was postponed out of respect for Mr. Hill and the Carleton community ([Feb 11, 1919, Carletonian](#)).

c. Summer and fall of 1919 (When things improved)

By the end of the 1918-1919 school year, the St. Olaf populace felt a mixture of sadness and great relief that they had survived such a great calamity (of both World War I and the flu in the same year!). In [fall of 1919](#), Carleton made plans to add public health classes to their course list, becoming one of the first colleges in the country to offer public health-specific coursework to undergraduate students. These new classes were largely influenced by the experiences of the previous school year; Mr. Dungay, the Carleton professor who spearheaded the program, made the connection to the influenza pandemic clear, writing:

“The influenza for instance, spread over the whole country in three weeks. The public is realizing more than ever the necessity of education along public health lines to counterbalance these new conditions... Bacteria toxins have been placed on a level with superstitions because they have not been understood, and here is the strategic point for the college to start training its students who will go out to teach in high schools all over the country and to be community leaders ([Nov. 25, 1919, Carletonian](#)).”

d. Jan/Feb 1920 (When it got bad again)

At the beginning of the 1920 outbreak, the sense is more of a combination of a rallying grief rather than an overwhelmed grief of the previous winter. Despite the sudden return of the epidemic which Northfield had understood as over, the colleges were more prepared to address cases and many people volunteered to help.

At the start of the return of the influenza, the *Northfield News* reported on [Jan, 30th, 1920](#) that “at the present time there need be no alarm felt.” By [February 13th of 1920](#), however, the *Northfield News* reported “things have at times looked pretty discouraging during the week.” They reported a gratitude for the Red Cross as well, writing “No one who has been in close touch with the work of the Red Cross during this ‘flu’ epidemic has anything but praise for the fine spirit with which people in general have responded to appeals for assistance in practically every

case where it was possible for them to do so” ([Feb. 13, 1920](#)). The *Northfield Independent* echoed similar sentiments in March:

“In closing the story of the influenza epidemic in the Northfield community this year, recognition should be given to the many volunteer workers who helped in the fight on the disease. Under the direction of the Red Cross they did splendid work, many of them in nursing, some as helpers, and others in the making of pneumonia jackets and in supplying meals to sick families” ([March 18, 1920](#)).

Within the climate of the returned flu, some people questioned different aspects of the ban. An article on February 12th in the *Northfield Independent* is titled: [“Does Closing Help?: Effectiveness in Preventing Influenza Spread is Disputed”](#). The article explains how they know of evidence that says “that the closing of such places [theaters and public gathering spaces] is ineffectual unless accompanied by stringent quarantine of all cases of the disease.” They cite a discussion with Dr Copeland, a health commissioner from New York, who said:

“There never was any doubt in my mind regarding the status of the well ventilated, sanitary theater, but I did have serious objection to allowing the insanitary, hole-in-the-wall theater to continue.”

This point-blank disagreement with the official response is notable in its difference to just a year before where the prevailing sense was that of patriotism. All sacrifices of the American people for the country were emphasized within the context of World War I, which overlapped with the first wave of influenza in the Northfield. However, it seems like the second wave was less directly influenced by these attitudes.

6. What changes did it make to daily living - schools, the colleges, homes, churches

a. Public schools, churches, homes

Daily living was first influenced by the first ban on October 10th, where many public gathering spaces such as the Grand theater, schools, and pool halls were closed. Thus, there were limited options for recreation and entertainment. This was again the case when the ban was re-instituted on [Nov. 12th](#). With the second ban, residents were asked to shop in the morning in order to reduce crowds, as there were a prescribed amount of individuals allowed in a store at any given time. Individuals from the country were asked to come to town earlier in the week instead of on Saturday. Face masks were required in most public settings and spaces. Many women also volunteered for the Red Cross, who had set up a workspace in the Northfield High School to sew masks and other supplies.

As churches were closed, sermons were published in the newspapers to be read at home on Sundays. Children did not attend school under quarantine, however residents were encouraged to

keep their children in their homes and not allow them to congregate in groups on the streets. The time lost by schools was made up by limiting the number of holidays and vacations going forward.

During the holidays, the effect of quarantine was strongly felt. In an article entitled "[It's a Strange Christmas: No Church Services-No Sunday School Festivities](#)" published by the *Northfield News* they report:

“Old man Influenza and Santa Claus have been running in close competition for the attention of people throughout the country, and Santa Clause has won over Northfield people by his argument that where there are too many people gathered together in a warm room, he is perfectly willing to keep away himself and give his opponent full reign.”

Nevertheless, the article continues, “in spite of it all, most people seem to be happy and among small groups there is much of the old time holiday excitement.”

When the influenza returned in the winter of 1920, Northfield residents were [again asked to quarantine](#) and public areas were closed, causing similar restrictions on daily activities as before.

b. Colleges

Under quarantine, students at the colleges could not go into town as they would in a typical year. Even if they did, they would have been confronted with the restrictions described above as affecting the residents of the town. There were also fewer parties and social gatherings in the fall of 1919, which was abnormal and made some students stir-crazy. Since sports were cancelled or greatly reduced in that same timeframe, there were complaints that the freshman were unseasoned in the winter when play resumed.

In 1920, when the flu returned again, concerts and events were postponed and many students were involved in volunteering for the Red Cross, working in the hospitals, or generally fighting the illness.

The pandemic caused large shifts in the campus culture of Carleton. In addition to the new restrictions on movement (beginning in November of 1918 students were not allowed to leave campus except for emergencies; read more about changes in the structure [here](#)), activities and classes also changed in response to influenza conditions. Students sought out more informal, single-sex entertainment; in lieu of large, all-campus events, students under quarantine enjoyed more subdued activities. During Thanksgiving of 1918, for instance, Carleton men enjoyed a shared dinner in the gymnasium (where they had been placed in quarantine). For the female side of campus, as the *Carletonian* reported, “the established Carleton customs of the day were carried out with the exception of their all-college evening party” ([December 3, 1918](#)). On

Thanksgiving day, female students participated in a traditional religious procession and finished the day with dancing and a meal in Gridley Hall.

Over the fall of 1918, Carleton women spent their free time walking (female students [organized evening walks](#) to “defy the influenza germs..”), reading (the *Carletonian* published [book lists](#) to keep bored students occupied in quarantine), and engaging in other forms of “[informal entertainment](#).” These activities mostly included listening to music in Gridley Hall (the female dormitory) and eating desserts with friends. Many women on campus also belonged to the Red Cross, where they worked to sew gauze strips and influenza masks. In November of 1918, while the men were still quarantined in the gymnasium, women in the Red Cross organized a special “fruit fund” to bring fresh fruit and daily newspapers to the men in quarantine ([Nov. 19, 1918](#)).

Many campus events were impacted by the outbreak of the disease. Several prominent tours, including a planned visit from well-known British educators were cancelled, and inter-collegiate sporting events were postponed beginning in November. In response, Carleton arranged intramural competitions - with the men facing off in several basketball tournaments over the fall ([Nov 26, 1918](#)). This structure of competition appears to have been a lasting impact of pandemic life; an article published in the spring of 1919 celebrated the intramural baseball season, writing that:

Intra-mural baseball, Carleton's temporary innovation for activity in that line of sport, has already found its place in the hearts of many followers of the national pastime and its substitution for inter-collegiate contests seems satisfactory. ([April 29, 1919](#)). .

7. Is there any information on how it affected minorities in Northfield?

No, there is little to no information about racial minorities in Northfield in this time frame. Although Northfield was a predominantly white community in these years, this absence of information is notable. This may be an interesting route for future study; since we are unclear of the exact demographics of Northfield at the turn of the 20th century, this lack of records could reflect either a lack of diversity in town *or* an exclusion of minority voices from official historical documents.

8. How did the City record the deaths

Within Northfield, Rice County, most of the deaths by the Spanish Influenza from 1918-1920 were declared with attribution to some variation on pneumonia and influenza. Pneumonia and influenza could be either the cause or the contributing cause of death (and in one case they are both cited as the cause when the doctor wrote “Influenza/Pneumonia”). Typically, the pneumonia was specified as “Broncho Pneumonia” or “Bronchial Pneumonia. “Lobar-Pneumonia” or “Pneumonia-Lobar” was occasionally cited. ([Death Records](#))

9. What changes did it bring out afterwards?

Since we focused primarily on mentions of influenza in the 1918-1920 time period, it was difficult to fully grasp the long-term impacts of the disease on Northfield through our research alone. This is perhaps another potential area for further study; future researchers may find it interesting to explore themes in primary sources *following* the pandemic to get a better sense of how the influenza shaped life in Northfield in the long run. However, some notable, shorter-term effects of the pandemic were apparent in some of the sources we read.

For one, many social clubs in town changed to reflect a preoccupation with the threat of disease. Northfield Public High School students, for instance, formed “The Health Crusaders,” in 1919, aiming to “form good personal habits and for the prevention of disease” ([Jan. 23, 1919, Northfield Independent](#)). “Just as civilization has banished all causes of famine from the land,” the *Northfield Independent* wrote of the club, “this organization plans to take away all causes of epidemics and diseases.” Likewise in 1920, as Carleton College also formed new clubs on campus, these associations were sure to include references to “influenza emergencies” as part of their duties ([March 23, 1920](#)). Course offerings at Carleton College also reflected a similar, newfound interest in the field of health and disease prevention, with courses in public health being introduced for the first time in the fall of 1919 ([Nov. 25, 1919](#)).

Also at Carleton College, intra-mural sports rose in popularity as a result of the epidemic. Left without competition in the fall of 1918 due to quarantine rules, the school organized basketball tournaments between men on campus. This structure seemed popular enough to survive past the end of quarantine; as the *Carletonian* wrote of intramural baseball in 1919:

“Intra-mural baseball, Carleton's temporary innovation for activity in that line of sport, has already found its place in the hearts of many followers of the national pastime and its substitution for inter-collegiate contests seems satisfactory.” ([April 29, 1919](#)).

Finally, Northfield saw the proposition of a city hospital in 1919. Though more research needs to be conducted to determine if this construction was indeed related to the influenza outbreak, entries from the *Northfield Independent* in [March of 1919](#) demonstrate a notable public interest in additional healthcare services following the pandemic. This interest included the passage of a highly popular City Charter amendment that created a city tax to support hospital costs ([March 16, 1919](#)).