

# The 1918 Influenza Pandemic

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## The 1918 Influenza Pandemic

The United States entered the War in 1918 and brought influenza to America that medical historian Roy Porter has called “the greatest single demographic shock mankind has ever experienced, the most deadly pestilence since the Black Death.”[1] In the late nineteen [thirties](#), members of the Federal Writer’s Project (FWP) with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), interviewed people who remembered surviving the pandemic. [2] They described a world caught off guard. Newly established “base camps” became makeshift hospitals and morgues. Doctors, embalmers, laundresses and florists did a brisk trade. Public venues closed, and as entire families became ill, mothers, husbands and soldiers remember coping with quarantines and loss of family. Sufferers put great stock in their ability to [treat](#) themselves as doctors and other health officials struggled with ineffective prevention and treatment strategies. For them, the flu of 1918 marked a major life change but it also became a testament to their ability to survive.

The flu came fast and it hit hard. Dr. Curtis Atkinson, then a First Lieutenant in the Medical Corps at Fort Riley, Kansas remembered the first military quarantines. “When the ‘flu’ epidemic struck Call Field, Sunday, December, 1918, the boys began to come down very

rapidly. A foot ball game was in progress. The commanding officer immediately ordered the game stopped and sentinels posted at the gate of the field with orders that no one was to be admitted.”[3] Another soldier, Dr. William W. Wood remembered soldiers and [civilians](#) “dying like sheep.”[4] Melinda Parker remembers how fast she lost her husband. “My husband... was workin' at the shipyards in Algiers an' he got the flu an' in four day...

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[14] “J. D. Washburn,” Interview by Douglas Carter.

[15] “History of Career (import) of J. H. Kimbrough,” Interview by Marie Reese.

[16] “Mountain Sharecroppers,” Interview by Anne Winn Stevens.

[17] Porter, Roy. 484

[18] “Dr. William W. Wood,” Interview by Miss Effie Cowan.

[19] “Reminiscences centered around Call Field,” Interview by Ethel Dulaney.

[20] “Dr. Wood”, Cowan

[21] “ Coal Fields to the Cotton Mill,” Interview by South Carolina Writer's Project.

[22] “J. D. Washburn,” Interview by Douglas Carter.

[23] “The Influenza Epidemic,” Interview by Jane K. Leary.

[24] “Note French Canadian Personalities,” Interview by Robert Grady.

[25] “The Influenza Epidemic,” Interview by Jane K. Leary.

[26] “Glenn Kanipe.” Interview with Ethel Deal.

[27] “Melinda Parker,” Interview by Louisiana Folklore

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