

# 1918 Spanish Flu Epidemic in St. Louis

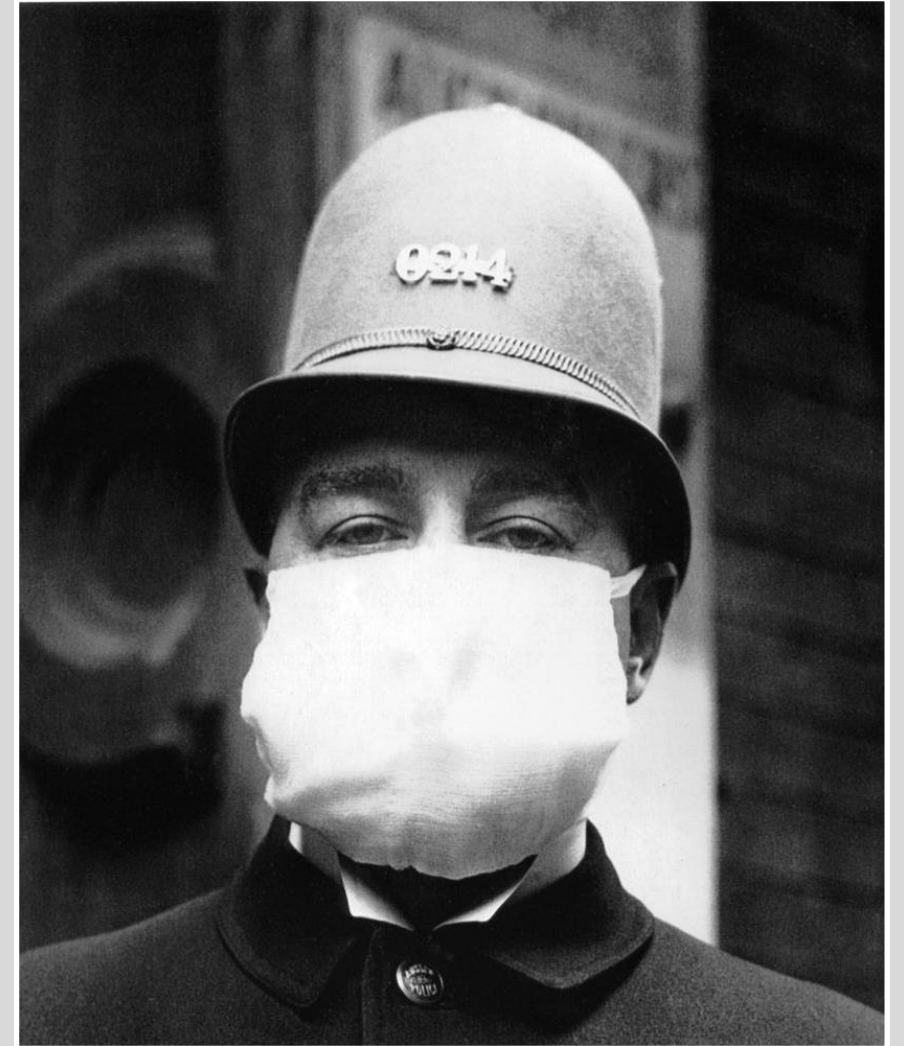


*From Historic Tales of St. Louis*

By Mark Zeman

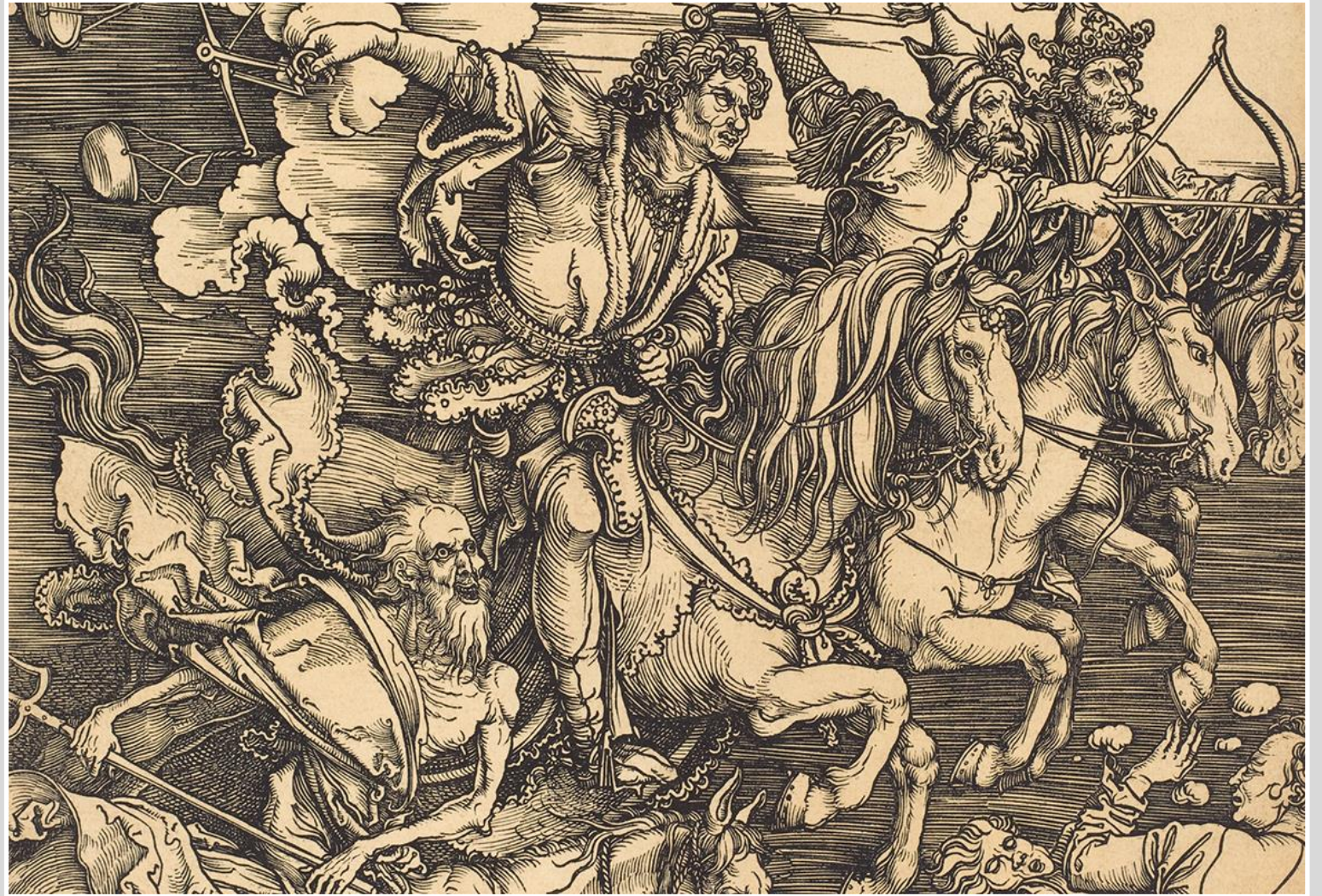
# St. Louis' Twisted Tale

- Global epidemic
- Global war
- Stealing coffins
- A medical treatment
- The new-fangled phonograph
- High explosives
- A German plot
- Wash U medical staff in France



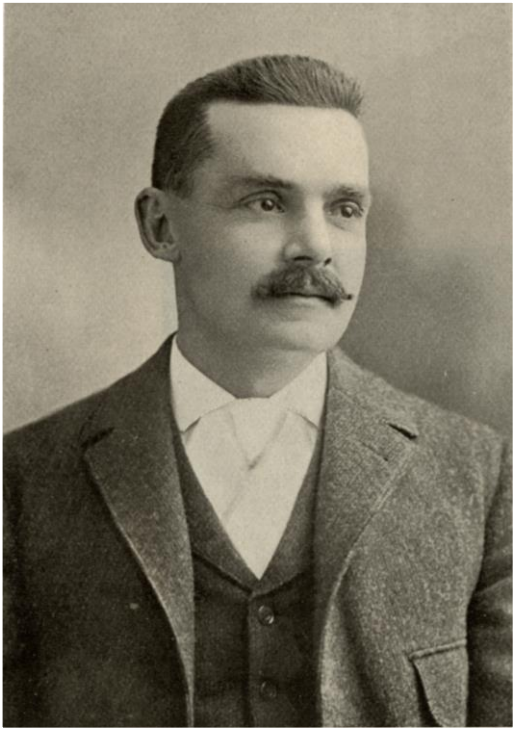
# A Modern Black Death

- Spanish Flu infected about a third of the world's population – about 500 million people
- 50 million died globally
- 675,000 died in U.S.
- 2/3 of the American deaths occurred in a 10-week period
- Concurrent with WWI
  - 20M military deaths
  - 10M civilian deaths

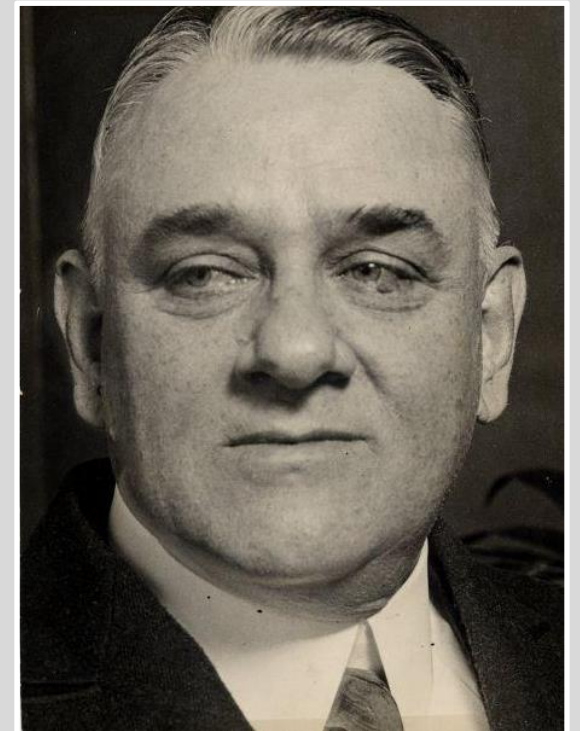


Albrecht Dürer's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

# Seeing the Coming Storm



- **Dr. Max C. Starkloff, Health Commissioner for the City of St. Louis**
- **Advised avoiding fatigue, alcohol, and crowds and getting plenty of fresh air, avoiding those who are ill, and wearing masks**
- **Mayor Henry Kiel backed Starkloff to close many public places**
- **Many businesses fought to loosen the order**



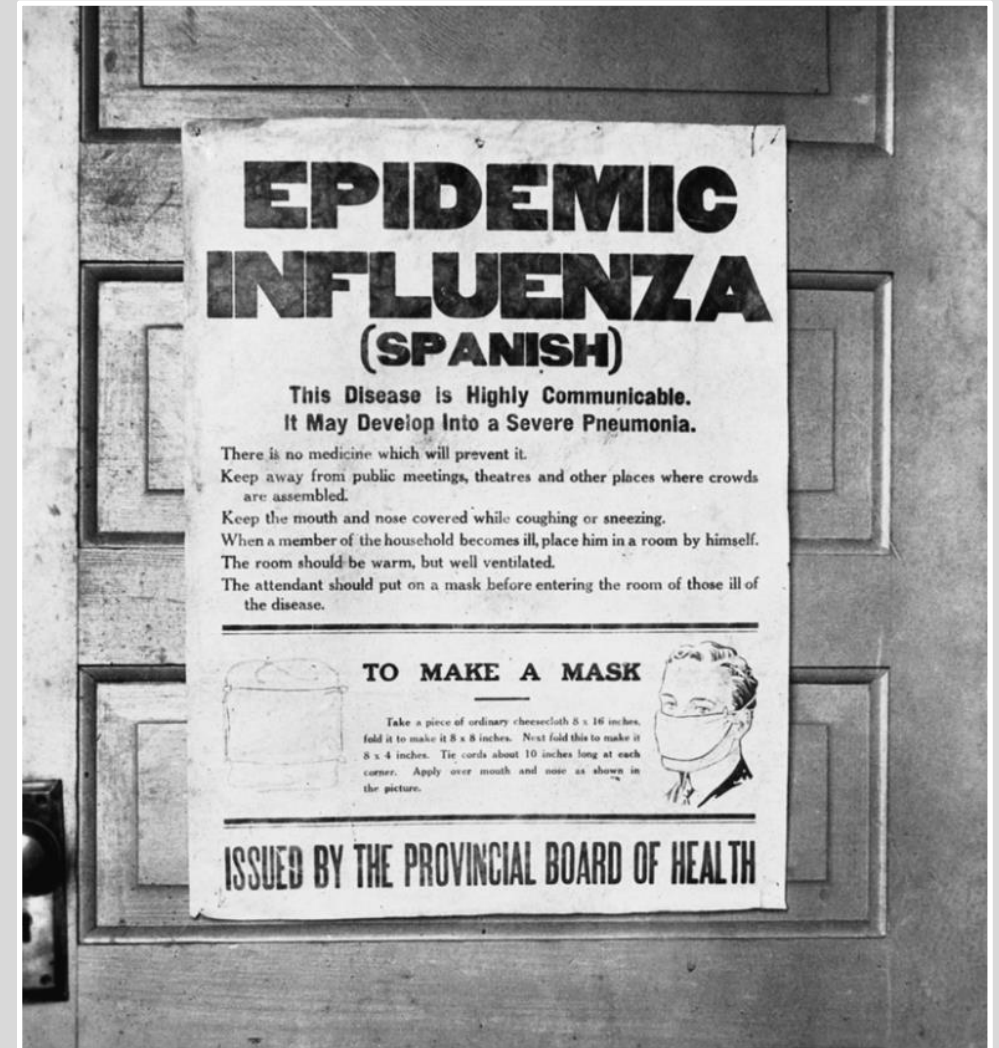
# Outbreak in St. Louis

- **St. Louis had first reported cases October 1, 1918, at Jefferson Barracks**
- **Within one week, 800 soldiers were hospitalized**
- **Barnes Hospital trained nurse aides and rushed them to the base**
- **Outbreak was contained**



# Measures

- St. Louis closed most public places – theaters, schools, bars, and churches
- Gatherings of 20 or more were prohibited
- Expanded to pool halls, playgrounds, library reading rooms, fraternal lodges, and the courts
- The American Red Cross printed over a million pamphlets in 8 languages:
  - English
  - Polish
  - Russian
  - Yiddish
  - Hungarian
  - Italian
  - Bohemian
  - Spanish



# Care and Quarantine



**More than 50 St. Louis hospitals cared for victims of the Spanish Flu**

**St. Mary's Infirmary**

# The War Effort

The military struggled to deal with war casualties and soldiers with influenza





# Wash U Sends Medical Staff to France

- In May 1917, the U.S. Army and the American Red Cross created 50 base hospitals with staff from university medical centers
- Doctors and nurses from Washington University were sent to Base Hospital 21 in Rouen, France
- They were among the first Americans to reach the European war zone
- During the two years of operation, Base Hospital 21 treated 61,453 patients
- In October 1918, the *daily* census reached 1,950 patients



# Opposition

- In St. Louis, two factors:
  - Negative financial impact
  - Civil liberty issues
- Businesses would suffer or even go out of business

## MASKS NOT POPULAR; MANY PEOPLE IGNORE HEALTH BOARD RULES

One Salongir's Nose Goes to Sleep, Another Has Higher Power Guarding Her Health, That's Why They Don't Wear Flu Bhs.

The flu virus was pronounced dead the morning after had departed him of a chance to with its latest local world and have investigated conditions in Denver yesterday, when, except for wearing white gaiters, most faces out of his face remained and offered the usual number of respiratory viruses for an unexplained virus disease as an up-breathing in a new

**Jimmy de Tough  
Wears Flu Mask,  
Mixes With Cops**

place. Outside of stores did not comply with the request to wear masks, a survey showed only about 20 per cent complied by the group. The health authorities had set to send an order to employees of stores to wear masks, and with a few of them did, except in one store, where they had their own. It had been said

# Elsewhere

- Where measures were lax, casualties were high
- In Philadelphia, 12,000 people died after the city held parade

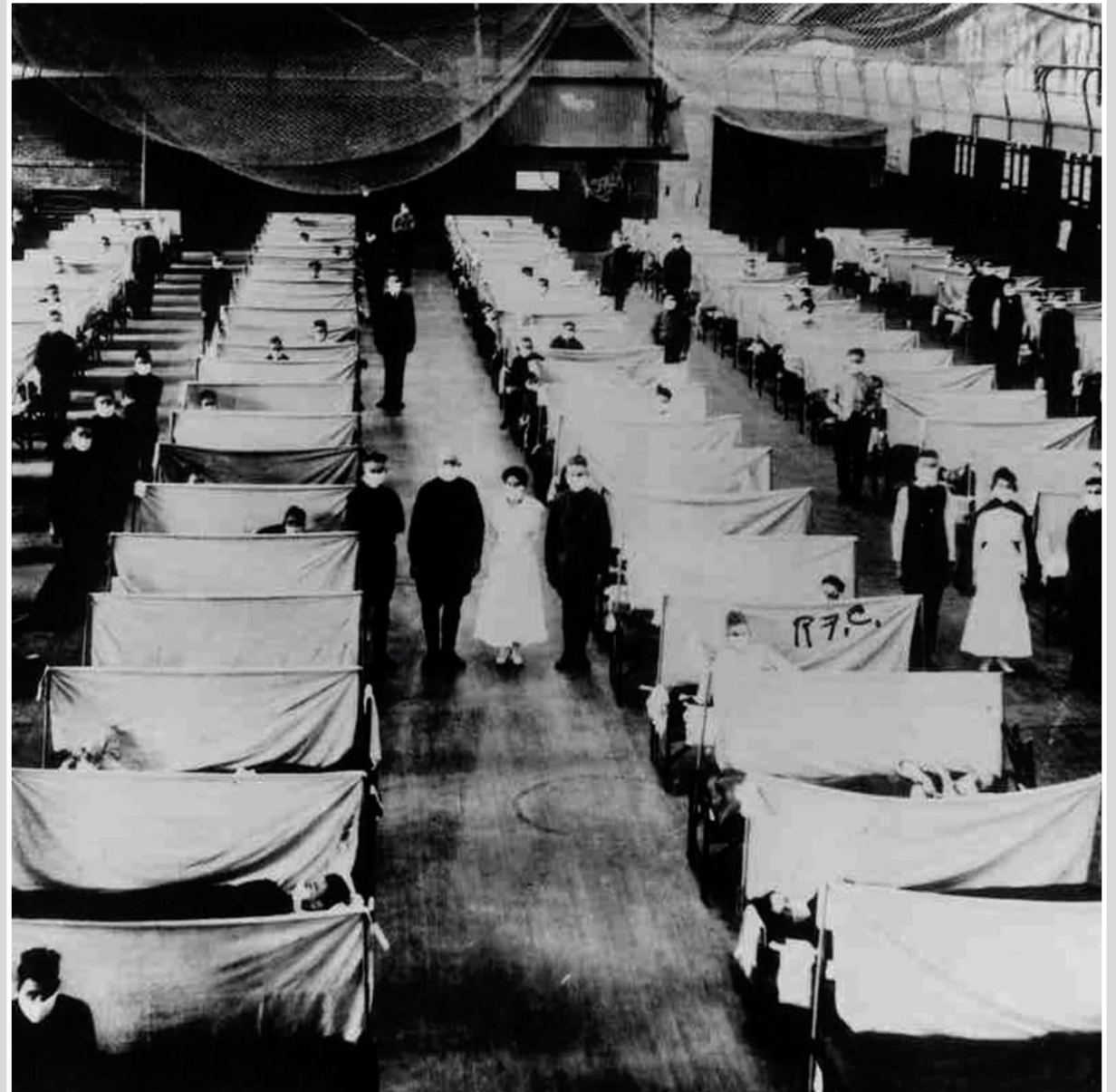
After the parade, *The Evening Bulletin* ran the headline, “This is a great day in Philadelphia”



# Overflowing Morgues

- In Washington D.C., people were dying so fast the city ran out of coffins
- Bodies piled up in the morgue
- Could not get grave diggers
- Baltimore and Philadelphia also had coffin shortages
- D.C. health officials discovered two rail cars carrying 270 coffins to Pittsburgh and rerouted them to D.C.

Philadelphia morgue

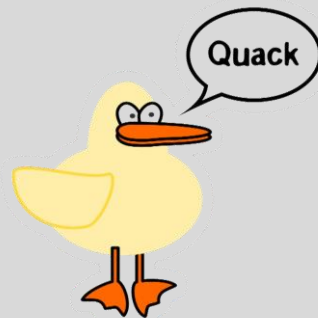


# But One Business Was Booming




# Few Treatments

- There were no vaccines or effective remedies
- Treatments of no value were used:
  - Laxatives
  - Camphor oil
  - Quinine (a malaria drug)
  - Gargling salt water
  - Snake oil



**The DIET**  
*During*  
*and After*

**The Old Reliable**  
**Round Package**



**HORLICK'S**  
**MALTED MILK**

**INFANTS, INVALIDS,**  
**AGED AND TRAVELERS**

GET REAL, CHINESE FOOD - A BISHOPING TAKE HOME  
Prepared by Dauching in Water Only  
NO COOKING OR MILK REQUIRED  
H. J. HORLICK & CO.  
MILWAUKEE, WIS., U. S. A.  
GREAT BRITAIN, AUSTRALIA, SWITZERLAND, ENGLAND

# INFLUENZA

## Horlick's

## Malted Milk

**Very Nutritious, Digestible**

The **REAL** Food-Drink, instantly prepared.  
Made by the **ORIGINAL** Horlick process and  
from carefully selected materials.

Used successfully over  $\frac{1}{4}$  century.  
Endorsed by physicians everywhere.

Specify **Horlick's** The Original  
**Others Are Imitations**

# Aspirin – the Miracle Drug

- The *only* medical treatment that offered any genuine relief was aspirin
- Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) was invented in 1897 by Bayer, a German company
- By 1914, aspirin was one of the most widely used medications in the world
- Bayer's patent expired in 1917
- Other drug companies began to manufacture it in time for the 1918 outbreak
- St. Louis-based Monsanto began manufacturing

# Aspirin Ingredient also Used for Explosives

- Salicylic acid / phenol is also a key component for high explosives
- At the outbreak of World War I, the United Kingdom was a primary supplier of phenol
- Once war broke out, the British cut off all trade with Germany, including that of phenol





# The Phonograph Debuted 1912

- Phenol also used to manufacture phonograph records
- Invented by Thomas Edison in 1912
- To stop disruption, Edison built a phenol factory which produced 11 tons a day
- He needed only 3 tons, so he planned to sell the surplus



# The German Plot

- The Germans didn't want the British to buy more phenol for high explosives
- They created a shell company to buy the surplus phenol
- The Bayer plant in New York City could resume making aspirin
- The Secret Service discovered the plot
- By then, the Germans diverted enough phenol to make 4.5 million pounds of high explosives
- Became known as *the Great Phenol Plot*

**The World**  
Circulation Books Open to All! NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 1917. 86 PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

## HOW GERMANY HAS WORKED IN U. S. TO SHAPE OPINION, BLOCK THE ALLIES AND GET MUNITIONS FOR HERSELF, TOLD IN SECRET AGENTS' LETTERS.

LETTERS MR. VIERECK AND DR. ALBERT WROTE TO EACH OTHER



Dear Dr. ALBERT:—

In thinking the matter over, I do not think that you, R. would be the proper intermediary inasmuch as the duty had, already to be assumed by you, the author of our friend Mr. L. would be far better.

However, personally I am so much so that I would not be made every month through my letter just like the other months. If there is any objection to that, I would suggest that the proceeds be made by personal friend and lawyer, Mr. E. Simpson, whose standing as an legal adviser exempts him from any possible inquiry.

As I have already received \$200 this month I am sorry to say that I shall send you \$100 for the month of July, sending this letter by you as for obvious reasons I do not wish to go through the mails.

Sincerely yours,  
J. M. Viereck

Dear Mr. ALBERT:—

As I have already received \$200 this month I am sorry to say that I shall send you \$100 for the month of July, sending this letter by you as for obvious reasons I do not wish to go through the mails.

Sincerely yours,  
J. M. Viereck

Dear Mr. ALBERT:—

As I have already received \$200 this month I am sorry to say that I shall send you \$100 for the month of July, sending this letter by you as for obvious reasons I do not wish to go through the mails.

Sincerely yours,  
J. M. Viereck

### SHUCKS HIS CLOTHING ON TELEGRAPH POLE

But Discarded Rummies Fall in Bits on Women and Causes—Well, Condemnation.

From a telegraph pole at Trenton, N. J., a man was seen to strip off his clothing and throw it overboard. The man was seen to strip off his clothing and throw it overboard. The man was seen to strip off his clothing and throw it overboard.

### WIFE AND GIRL FIND HUSBAND SLAIN IN HOME

John Hildebrandt Blamed, Then Shot, in His Apartment, in Fifth Avenue.

John Hildebrandt, a wealthy resident of New York, was found dead in his apartment in Fifth Avenue. His wife and daughter discovered his body in the apartment.

### Dr. Albert Demands Control of the Fatherland's Policy

Dr. Albert demands control of the Fatherland's policy. He demands control of the Fatherland's policy.

### Count Hildebrandt's German-American Career

Count Hildebrandt's German-American career. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### Count Franz von Papen, the Military Attache of the Embassy

Count Franz von Papen, the Military Attache of the Embassy. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### Dr. Heinrich F. Albert, the Chief Financial Agent of the German Embassy

Dr. Heinrich F. Albert, the Chief Financial Agent of the German Embassy. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### Her Hugo Schmidt, Western Representative of the Deutsche Bank of Berlin

Her Hugo Schmidt, Western Representative of the Deutsche Bank of Berlin. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### Hugh Schwenker's German-American Career

Hugh Schwenker's German-American career. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### S. Sulzberger, a banker in Frankfurt, Germany

S. Sulzberger, a banker in Frankfurt, Germany. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### Herr Wastendorff, trade representative of the German Government in this country

Herr Wastendorff, trade representative of the German Government in this country. He was a prominent figure in the German-American community.

### Agents of the German Bureau of Information (Secret Service), and various other agents who are not officially identified, in the public view, with the German Government.

Agents of the German Bureau of Information (Secret Service), and various other agents who are not officially identified, in the public view, with the German Government.

### The financial features of the undertakings of Germany in this country are shown to have been carried on by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, S. Sulzberger & Sons, Company of Frankfurt, Germany; the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Inc.; and the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Inc.

The financial features of the undertakings of Germany in this country are shown to have been carried on by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, S. Sulzberger & Sons, Company of Frankfurt, Germany; the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Inc.; and the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Inc.

### The magnitude of some of the transactions suggests expenditure of a very large sum of money every week, one estimate based upon pretty accurate knowledge of these transactions fixing the figure at \$2,000,000.

The magnitude of some of the transactions suggests expenditure of a very large sum of money every week, one estimate based upon pretty accurate knowledge of these transactions fixing the figure at \$2,000,000.

### The transfer from the Imperial Interior Bureau through the Deutsche Bank to the credit of the German Ambassador in this country is \$1,000,000 a month for the use of the secret service maintained by it here.

The transfer from the Imperial Interior Bureau through the Deutsche Bank to the credit of the German Ambassador in this country is \$1,000,000 a month for the use of the secret service maintained by it here.

### The disclosure contained in the correspondence, the authenticity of which has been clearly established, shows that the German propaganda has for its purpose of inveigling the United States in the complications of the European war, that the plans designed to accomplish this result were carefully and deliberately projected, efficiently organized, expertly executed and adequately financed.

The disclosure contained in the correspondence, the authenticity of which has been clearly established, shows that the German propaganda has for its purpose of inveigling the United States in the complications of the European war, that the plans designed to accomplish this result were carefully and deliberately projected, efficiently organized, expertly executed and adequately financed.

### Every move made in furtherance of the German propaganda and of specific undertakings is shown to have

Every move made in furtherance of the German propaganda and of specific undertakings is shown to have

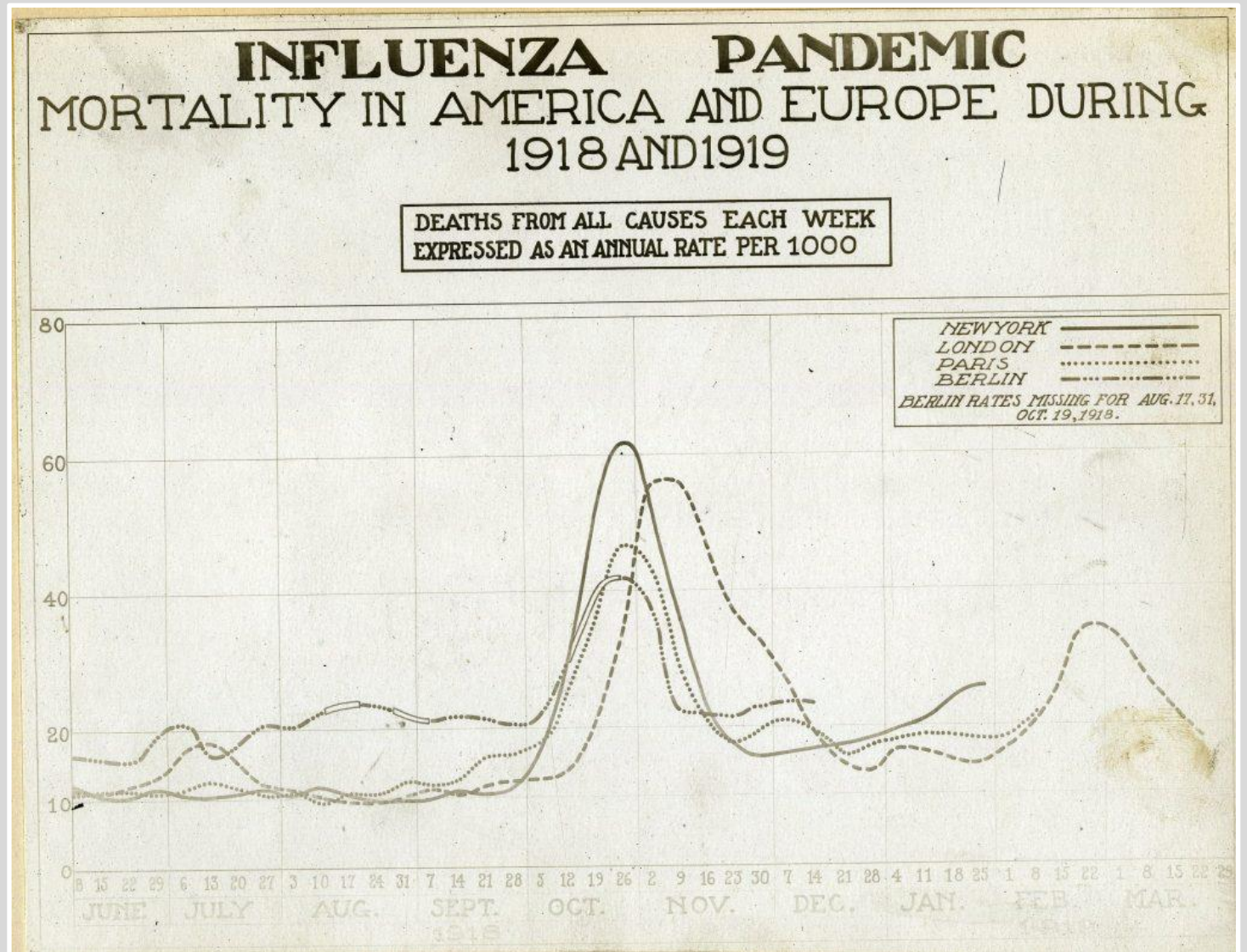
# Strange Twist – Bayer Buys Monsanto in 2018

- In 2018 the German Bayer company purchased the St. Louis-based Monsanto, producer of aspirin during World War I
- Did you know...the town of Sauget, Illinois, used to be named Monsanto, after the chemical plant there



# Once It Was Over

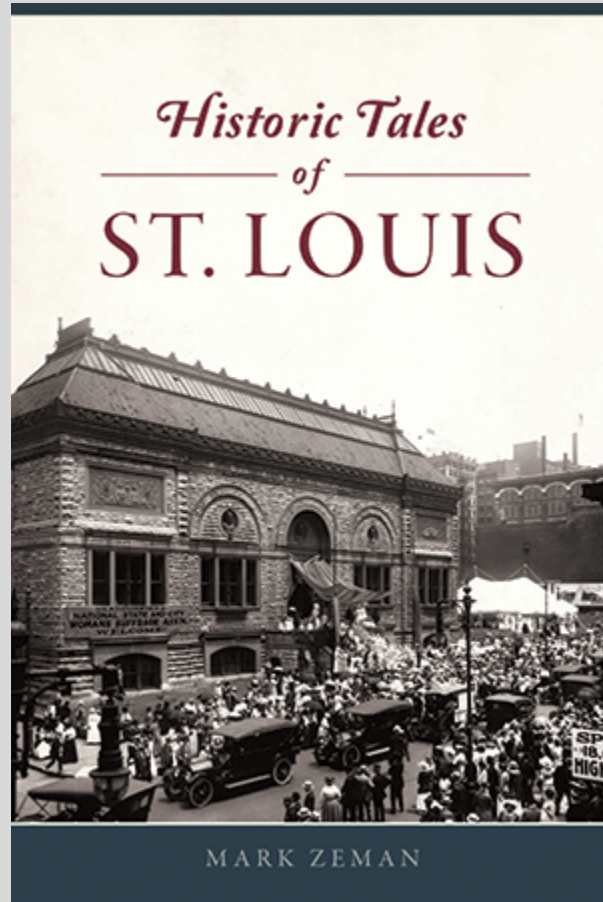
- By the time it was over, St. Louis ranked lower than major East Coast cities
- Ranking 37th among the 49 cities with populations above 100,000
- A year after the outbreak, Congress passed the National Prohibition Act, and the nation went from pandemic to compulsory sobriety



# Special Thanks to

**S**pine Bookstore & Café  
1976 Arsenal St. STL  
314.925.8087

**U**nseen St. Louis



A Chapter from  
*Historic Tales of St. Louis*

by  
Mark Zeman

Arcadia Publishing / The History Press