

Middle and
High School

The Spanish flu at Camp Funston

Overview

This lesson is used with the video "The Influenza Epidemic of 1918". Camp Funston was the epicenter of the Spanish Flu outbreak in 1918. The students will learn about the conditions at Camp Funston by analyzing primary sources including a telegram, a letter, and a photograph from 1918. Using these resources students will write a letter to a concerned parent of a Camp Funston soldier.

Standards

KHGSS Standards (2020)

Standard 4: Societies experience continuity and change over time.

Benchmark 3: The student will investigate and connect continuity and change to a contemporary issue.

ELA Standards (2017)

Text Types and Purposes

W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Objectives

Content

1. The student will explain how the Spanish Flu epidemic effected Kansas soldiers.

Skills

1. The student will read and be able to interpret the meaning of primary sources.

Essential Questions

1. Why is it important that government agencies provide honest and accurate information to the public?

Assessments

Write a letter from Kansas Governor Capper to a concerned parent of a Camp Funston soldier explaining how the military is handling the flu outbreak.

Activities

Students will read and interpret three primary sources to explain how the Spanish Flu epidemic effected Kansas soldiers and their families. Students can use the primary sources provided or use the link to access them online.

1. Students will read the telegram by Governor Capper and then answer the question: Why was this telegram written?

This telegram was written by Kansas Governor Arthur Capper to General Leonard Wood, commander of Camp Funston, on October 19, 1918. Telegrams were messages sent by telegraph and then delivered in printed form. This was the fastest and most secure way to send an important message at this time. Telegrams were sent using Morse Code, a series of dots and dashes. For this reason, the operator had to include the word "period" at the end of a sentence and could not use a dot.

2. Students will read the letter from Adjutant General Huffman and make a list of at least three pieces of evidence: What evidence did Adjutant General Huffman give in his letter to show that soldiers were well-cared for at Camp Funston?

3. Students use close-looking skills to examine the photograph of a hospital barracks at Camp Funston in 1918. They will write down what they see. Using this photograph, students will list three observations on how this hospital differs from a COVID-19 hospital today.

4. Assessment: Using what they have learned from these three primary sources, students will write a one-page letter from Kansas Governor Capper to a concerned parent of a Camp Funston soldier explaining how the military is handling the flu outbreak.

Sources:

- Governor Capper telegram, kansasmemory.org/item/217154
- Adjutant General Huffman letter, kansasmemory.org/item/217149
- Hospital barracks at Camp Funston, U.S. Army photographer - Army.mil
<http://www.army.mil/-images/2008/09/24/22729/army.mil-2008-09-25-103608.jpg>

Governor Capper telegram

Form 229

NIGHT LETTER

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

25,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA INCORPORATED CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD
THEO. N. VAIL, PRESIDENT BELVIDERE BROOKS, GENERAL MANAGER

RECEIVER'S No.	TIME FILED	CHECK

SEND the following NIGHT LETTER subject to } October 19, 1918.
the terms on back hereof which are hereby agreed to

5-3

General Leonard Wood,
Camp Funston, Kansas.

Delegation of twelve mothers of men at Funston called on me today and urged that I investigate conditions at Funston period. They have heard many wild rumors and are greatly alarmed about Influenza epidemic period. I received several letters today similar to those forwarded you yesterday in which relatives express great uneasiness about conditions at Funston and Fort Riley period. I will appreciate it very much if you will wire or write me soon as possible a statement of actual conditions especially as to the care that is being given sick soldiers period. I would like a report for publication period. If you cannot give me a report as to conditions at isolation camp Fort Riley please tell me where I can obtain information.

ARTHUR CAPPER, GOVERNOR.

Prepay.
Chg. Gov. Office.

STATE OF KANSAS
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
TOPEKA

5-13
October 23, 1918.

File
Governor Arthur Capper:

In compliance with your request, and in accordance with an invitation from General Wood, I visited Camp Funston today and made an inspection of the barracks and the Base Hospital where the patients suffering from Spanish Influenza are being cared for and treated.

Every means possible was furnished by General Wood, that my inspection could be made thorough and complete. He said "everything was open" and that I was at liberty to go into any part of the camp and make such investigation as desired. He directed the Chief Surgeon of the Division and Commanding Officer of the Base Hospital to accompany me on the inspection, and instructed them to furnish me with all the information at their command.

In Camp Funston proper, I found that twenty-two buildings or barracks, the Red Cross, the Nebraska and the Kansas buildings, were used as hospitals during the height of the epidemic. At this time, all of the twenty-two barracks, are vacant and being cleaned with one exception, where a number of patients that were convalescing were kept. Only convalescents were in the Red Cross building. In the Kansas building, there were only 125 patients and they were all on the road to recovery. 911, all told, were treated in the Kansas building.

Only one death occurred among those kept in the buildings just named. The majority of the pneumonia and all serious cases were transferred to the Base Hospital. The total number of cases of influenza and pneumonia, something like 14,500; deaths up to date from these causes, 871. The total number of soldiers at Camp Funston is now 65,000.

At this time, I find there are 3300 patients in the Hospital; of these, 1200 have pneumonia. The latter number includes the convalescents. In the last twenty-four hours, there have been nine deaths. I went through many of the wards of the Base Hospital and made as good an examination as was possible in a limited time, of a number of the patients, and while there are a number who are in a serious condition, the majority are in a fair way to recovery. The condition of the wards is excellent, as to cleanliness and ventilation, and all that could be expected in any good hospital. There are plenty of nurses and doctors to give each patient all the attention needed.

Gov. A. C.
#2.

STATE OF KANSAS
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
TOPEKA

Inspection of the kitchens showed they were in good condition and the food first class in every respect. I watched the attendants prepare the trays to be taken to the patients, examined minutely the kind and character of the food (also the menus prepared from day to day) and found it was all that could be desired. The bedding and linen was clean and quantity ample to meet the emergency.

No doubt, but at the beginning of the epidemic when they were receiving hundreds of patients daily (in one day 1400 were admitted), and there was a lack of nurses and trained attendants, there was much hardship and suffering. But we must remember that this epidemic came suddenly like a stroke of lightning out of a clear sky, and that in many places the civilian population suffered from not being able to meet the emergency. I found that many of the nurses and doctors were on duty almost continuously at the height of the epidemic, and are to be commended for their efforts to meet this great emergency.

The anxiety of parents and relatives was to be expected, and another problem for the Camp authorities was to allay their fears and give them all the comfort they possibly could.

At this time, I think I can assure you that no parent or relative need have any apprehension but what boys in camp are receiving the best of attention and treatment. The influenza is subsiding and it is to be hoped in a short time, it will be completely under control.

CHAS. S. HUFFMAN,
The Adjutant General, Kansas.

WESTERN BOND

Hospital barracks at Camp Funston

