

# Service over there, support over here: Riley County during World War I

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Contributing writer

Just over 100 years ago, the United States formally entered World War I, with American troops arriving on the European Western Front in 1918. More than 1,000 of those troops who served were Riley Countians.

Last fall, the Riley County Historical Museum, 2309 Claffin Road, opened an exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of U.S. entry into World War I. As the exhibit continues through 2018, it also will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice, formally ending the "Great War." The exhibit features photographs, documents and artifacts related to Riley Countians who served during the war, as well as the war's influence on the Riley County home front.

At 7 p.m. April 10, the Riley County Historical Society will present "The 1918 Influenza Pandemic" by Jed Dunham at the Manhattan Headquarters Fire Station, located at 2000 Denison. The program is free and everyone is welcome. Jed Dunham, a consultant with Kansas State University Military/Veterans Cultural Programs, and a researcher/writer, has worked extensively on the history of World War I and particularly how Kansas State University students and the local community responded to the war.

Fort Riley's major role as a training base during World War I brought 50,000 soldiers to Manhattan and Riley County in 1917. Camp Funston, the U.S. training camp on Fort Riley, became one of the 16 Divisional Cantonnements in the country, training soldiers to support an army at war. Named for Maj. Gen. Frederick Funston, a prominent leader during the Philippine-American War, Camp Funston was built just five miles east of the main post.

Construction of Camp Funston began in the summer of 1917, and more than

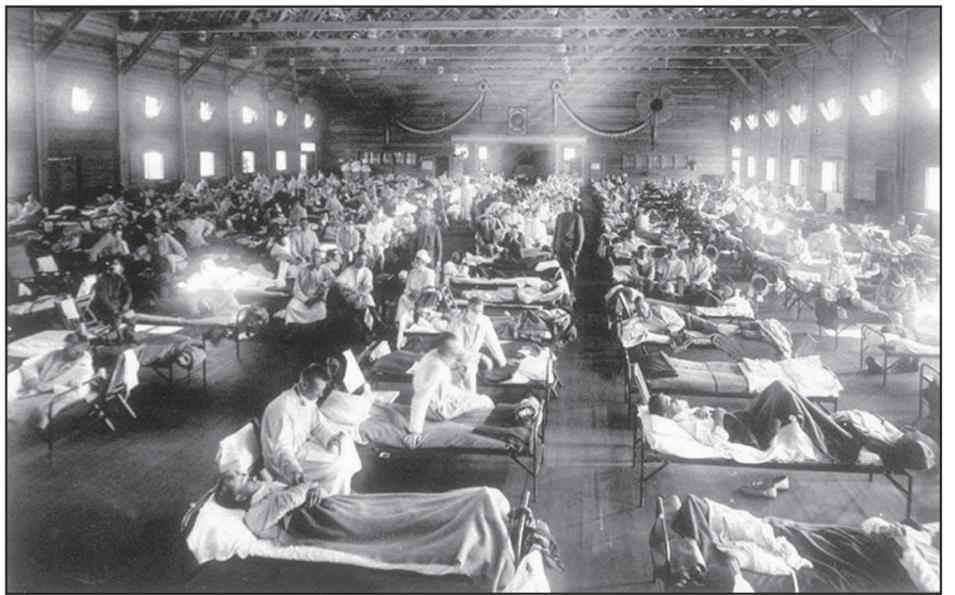
1,700 buildings were assembled when soldiers began arriving. By the end of 1918, around 4,000 buildings existed. Camp Funston became home to many soldiers who trained in several different fields including medical, veterinary, remount depot, and most notably, infantry. To prepare American soldiers for war, Fort Riley constructed a complex system of trenches and a hospital bunker. This 78-acre system allowed troops to engage in a variety of training exercises, such as trench firing, machine gun training, and field fortification studies.

Following the war, Camp Funston became a "mustering out" center as soldiers prepared to return to civilian life. In March 1918, Fort Riley documented the first cases of what would be known as the "Spanish Influenza." The pandemic's nickname, Spanish Flu, is attributed to wartime censors' minimization of early reports of illness in order to maintain morale. Papers in neutral Spain, however, openly reported the devastation of the worldwide epidemic, creating a false impression of the flu's concentration in Spain. During the first outbreak of influenza in Kansas, nearly 2,000 soldiers were hospitalized. The second outbreak resulted in the hospitalization of 17,000 soldiers, forcing officials to quarantine the entire state of Kansas.

On exhibit at the Riley County Historical Museum, are three Musterole jars. With mustard oil as the primary remedial ingredient, Musterole became popular during World War I for relief of cough, congestion and muscle aches, and likely was used to help alleviate influenza symptoms of those afflicted.

One of the most notable objects on display is the large service plaque created in 1918 with the hand-painted names of 1,009 Riley Countians who served during the war.

One name that can be found on the service plaque is 1st Lt. Vernon Bates. Bates,



An influenza ward full of sick soldiers at Camp Funston on Fort Riley around 1918.

Courtesy photo

born Sept. 15, 1889, served in Barricourt, France during the war after receiving his training at Fort Riley in April 1917. Although wounded in combat and falsely listed in local newspapers as having died of disease, Bates returned home to Manhattan following the war. Bates died on Oct. 5, 1976, and is buried in Sunset Cemetery in Manhattan. His dog tags are on display, along with the newspaper report that listed Bates as a casualty, to help tell his story of service.

Another name found on the service plaque is Capt. Hile Rannells. Born in Manhattan in 1890, Rannells served as a captain in the Coast Artillery Corps during the war. Rannells' uniform, helmet, dog tags, and identification card are on display.

Prior to the war, Rannells worked as a rancher, an occupation he resumed after the war ended. Just south of Manhattan, land known as the Rannells Ranch was assigned to the Kansas State University Livestock and Meat Industry Council for research purposes in 1984.

The land was named the Hilas Bay Rannells Flint Hills

Prairie Preserve, named for Hile's father.

A \$16,000 grant from Rotarians along with a voter-matched bond of \$25,000 from the city, allowed funding for construction of a new community hall in Manhattan. Dedicated on July 4, 1917, the Community House, still located at Fourth and Humboldt streets today, served as a recreational and support center for soldiers. Gen. Leonard Wood, commander at Camp Funston, attended the grand opening in June 1918. The Community House hosted many municipal and military events, such as dances and music concerts. Some of the formal invitations to Community House events from 1918 can be seen in the exhibit.

With funding from campus and community members, Kansas State Agricultural College built Memorial Stadium as a monument to K-Staters who died in World War I. Within 24 hours of being asked to contribute \$40, students alone pledged \$76,000 of the estimated \$350,000 needed to complete the stadium. Another fund drive took place and construction of the east stands

began with its completion in 1924. The stadium was officially dedicated as Memorial Stadium, a World War I memorial, on April 21, 2017, 100 years after the United States' entry into the war.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, more commonly known today as Veteran's Day, please stop by the Riley County Historical Museum to learn more about the unique experiences and stories of those from the local community who served their country during World War I.

The exhibit is available for viewing during normal museum hours: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 2-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission is free.

Allana Parker received a bachelor's degree in history from Kansas State University and a master's degree in museum studies from the University of Kansas. She has served as curator of design with the Riley County Historical Museum since 2012 and is a member of the board of directors for the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance and the Kansas Museums Association.

## Independent reviewer backs study calling for \$2 billion boost in K-12 ed spending

Associated Press

TOPEKA — An independent reviewer has backed the validity of a study that found improving Kansas' public schools could cost an additional \$2 billion a year.

Jesse Levin, a principal researcher at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C., told a joint meeting of the House and Senate K-12 budget committees Thursday that the study conducted by Texas A&M University professor Lori Taylor and Jason Willis, director at the San Francisco-based nonprofit education research agency WestEd, was "fairly cutting-edge and done very, very well."

Lawmakers hired Levin to conduct a peer review of the study.

His research found that Kansas would need to spend an additional \$1.8 billion to \$2.1 billion a year on education to boost its high school graduation rate to 95 percent

and raise significant numbers of students up to grade level or college readiness on statewide reading and math tests, the Lawrence Journal-World reported.

Legislators are facing a Kansas Supreme Court mandate to increase spending on public schools.

When the results of the study were released earlier this month, they sent shockwaves through the Statehouse, especially among conservatives who quickly dismissed the findings.

Levin said he initially was troubled that Taylor and Willis recommended an increase that was vastly higher than that of a study done in 2006 amid another school finance lawsuit.

At that time, the Legislative Division of Post Audit, or LPA, found the state needed to add roughly \$399 million in new spending.

However, Levin said the LPA study was based on the cost

of providing services that schools are legally required to provide, while the Taylor study looked at the cost of achieving certain educational outcomes like raising the graduation rate and improving test scores.

He also said that he believes the LPA study recommended less than it should have, but that both studies indicate the state needs to allocate significantly more money to public education.

On Wednesday, the night before Levin's review was released, the House K-12 Education Budget Committee passed out a new funding plan that would phase in only about \$522 million in

additional money for schools over the next five years.

Lawmakers are under a deadline to pass a new funding plan before their scheduled adjournment next week for a break.

That's because the Kansas Supreme Court has said the state must file briefs with the court no later than April 30, detailing what lawmakers did to pass a funding plan that will meet constitutional muster.

After briefing lawmakers, Levin told reporters that he thinks the court should take the new study into account when it next reviews the case.

"It seems like a solid study to me after reviewing it," he said.

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