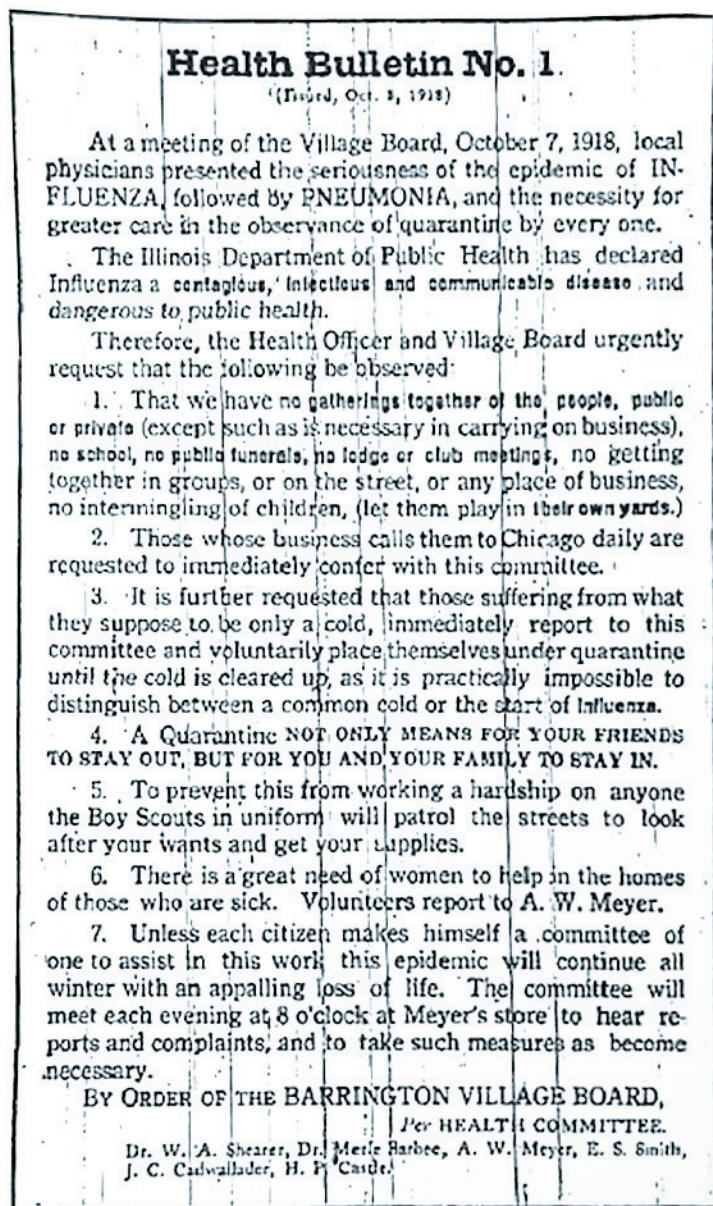


## WITHIN THESE WALLS: SPIRIT, SURVIVAL, AND CELEBRATION

BARRINGTON IN THE PANDEMIC OF 1918



IT IS SEPTEMBER 1918, and the "grandest house in Barrington" stands empty after the deaths of its owners, Julia and John Robertson. The Barrington Review is reporting that many in the community are sick with influenza. With about 1,700 people, Barrington could not escape the Spanish flu, then on a world-wide rampage from February 1918 to April 1920 with its often-deathly aftermath of pneumonia.

A front page column on September 26, 1918, laid out the local situation: "Spanish influenza, which is sweeping the United States just at present, has its effect in Barrington, and physicians report 15 cases up to this morning. The situation is not alarming however, but precaution should be taken to guard against its spreading. Those afflicted are immediately under quarantine.

The Board of Health asks those who are ailing or who have the disease to remain indoors. Sneezing, coughing and spitting in public places help to spread the disease. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and help to keep germs from spreading. Children should play in their own yard. The board also suggests that should you feel the disease coming on, to spray your throat with an antiseptic solution or gargle."

On October 1, the first of regular Health Bulletins was published in the Review (see image). In early October, the president of the State Board of Health called for a temporary hospital to be opened in Barrington. The Robertson heirs stepped forward and offered their parents former residence.

On October 17, the Review reported that "the community proved to be willing and public spirited, loaning equipment and giving their services so that within a few hours there was a fully furnished hospital with doctors, nurses and patients. There were even two sailor boys from the Great Lakes Naval Training Center who were familiar with nursing influenza cases."

John Cadwallader, secretary of the Village Board, helped to care for the sick at the Robertson House. He recalled that he constantly gargled clear Listerine and kept on going. By January 1919, the State Health Board considered that the major threat had passed, and the hospital was ordered closed. Four patients remained, with three nurses and two sailors to care for them. Overall, the hospital had received 123 patients and only one had died, considered by officials, a remarkable record.

The magnificent house was returned to the Robertson heirs. In the ensuing years it would be a residence, tea room and antique store; from 1945 to 1968, the Barrington Rest Home; and lastly, Barrington Realty Company. In 2007, it was acquired by the Village of Barrington. The Village and many generous donors restored the Robertson House to its original beauty. Now Barrington's White House, it is a center for community and family celebrations, and for the arts and humanities. Its ballroom is alive once more with the sounds of words and music.

But no time in its history has more poignancy than when its walls sheltered those clinging precariously to life during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. U