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"Did ya get that for yer birthday? Gee! that's some hankachif."
"Yeh, me mother made it for me. It's good for a hundred sneezes."
... The New York World tried to find some
humor in the epidemic.

In the midst of all the Spanish-Flu-caused chaos, people needed to find humor somewhere. This image, of a cartoon published in the *New York World*, provides an example.

People in various health departments were often as clueless as the public about the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. Official information, given in press releases, sometimes looked like tongue-in-cheek advice. This list of things-not-to-do, for example, appeared in Chicago on October 24, 1918:

Influenza Don'ts

- Don't live in the dark*
- Don't shut the sunshine out of your home*
- Don't exclude the fresh air*
- Don't fail to keep clean*
- Don't go into crowd places*
- Don't associate with people who sneeze and cough in your presence*
- Don't use common towels*
- Don't fail to practice what you preach*
- Don't overtax your physical powers. Cut out evening entertainments. Be in bed by ten o'clock.*
- Don't fail to sleep with every window in your bedroom open.*
- Don't fail to call your doctor for yourself or any other member of your family at the first sign of illness. Better be safe than sorry.*
- Don't allow your home to become damp, chilly, or uncomfortable.*
- Don't fail, if possible, to walk to your work in the morning and to your home at night. The open air exercise will be of decided benefit.* (See DePaul University website for [more information on this article.](#))

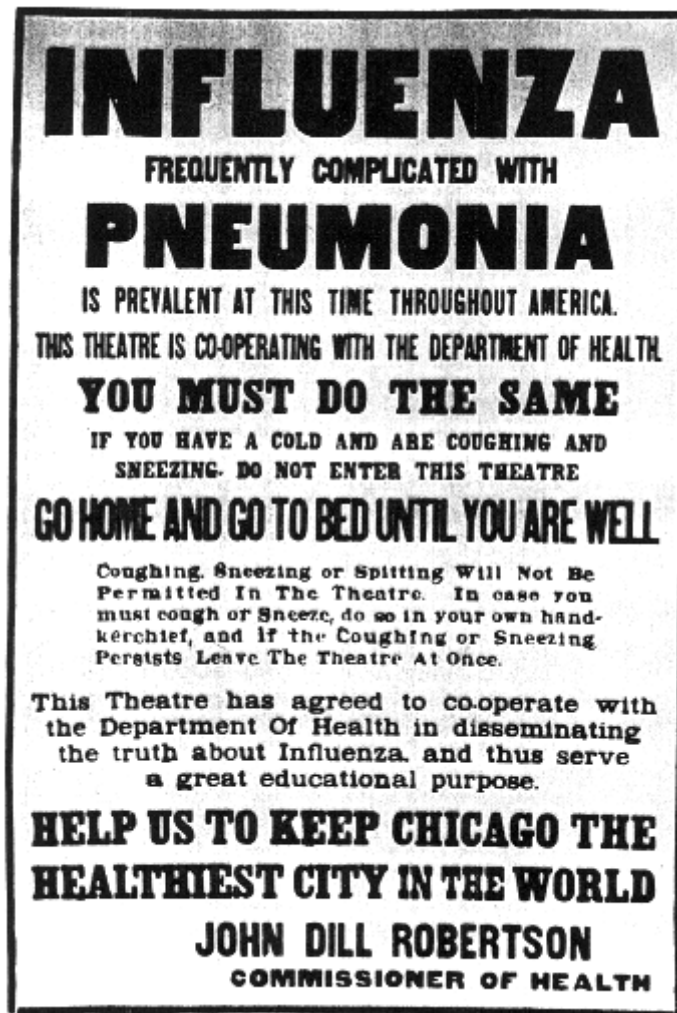
Where was information like this posted?

Posters were hung at the entrances of theaters, on elevated train platforms (and in the cars themselves), and other various places around the city.

The Department of Health produced lantern slides to be shown in every moving picture theater in Chicago. These slides warned the public about the danger of sneezing and asked those with colds to leave the theater.

Life in the city was not altered significantly by the extensive warnings because the citizens didn't consider the announcements to be threatening in any way.

Perhaps that's because the advice didn't seem particularly helpful.



To learn more information about the article in which the political-cartoon image appears, published in the May-June 1986 issue of *Navy Medicine*, see: Morrisey, Carla R. "[The Influenza Epidemic of 1918.](#)" *Navy Medicine* 77, no. 3 (May-June 1986): 11-17.

Credits:

New York World cartoon, included in the May-June 1986 issue of *Navy Medicine*. Online, courtesy iBiblio (The Public's Library and Digital Archive) at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

In-text image of a Chicago poster endorsed by Chicago's Commissioner of Health, online via Wikimedia Commons.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Spanish-Flu-Cartoon>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Spanish-Flu-Cartoon>

Media Stream

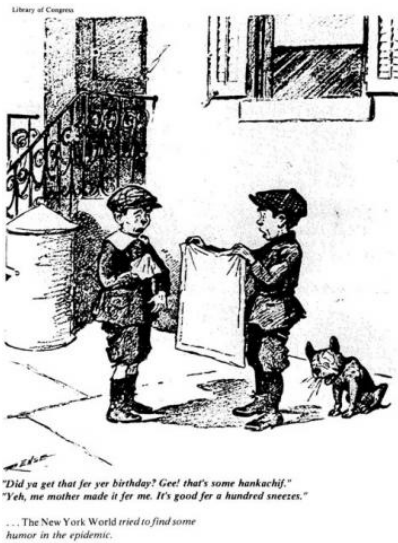
INFLUENZA
 FREQUENTLY COMPLICATED WITH
PNEUMONIA
 IS PREVALENT AT THIS TIME THROUGHOUT AMERICA.
 THIS THEATRE IS CO-OPERATING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.
YOU MUST DO THE SAME
 IF YOU HAVE A COLD AND ARE COUGHING AND
 SNEEZING. DO NOT ENTER THIS THEATRE
GO HOME AND GO TO BED UNTIL YOU ARE WELL
 Coughing, Sneezing or Spitting Will Not Be
 Permitted In The Theatre. In case you
 must cough or sneeze, do so in your own hand-
 kerchief, and if the Coughing or Sneezing
 Persists Leave The Theatre At Once.

This Theatre has agreed to cooperate with
 the Department Of Health in disseminating
 the truth about Influenza, and thus serve
 a great educational purpose.

**HELP US TO KEEP CHICAGO THE
 HEALTHIEST CITY IN THE WORLD**
JOHN DILL ROBERTSON
 COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

1918 Chicago Theatre Warning on Flu

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Spanish Flu - Cartoon

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