

Unforgettable year of Tulane history recounted in exhibit

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Taken from the north side of Freret Street at approximately the southwest corner of the current Devlin Fieldhouse, the photograph looks down "Company Street" all the way to Cudd Hall (then known as the Refectory). The taller brick buildings on the right, now known as Fortier and Mussafer Halls, were dormitories at the time. (Photo from Tulane University Archives)

Tulane University archivist Ann E. Case paints a picture of turmoil and perseverance in her new exhibit, "September 1918's Winds of War: War, Women, and the Spanish Influenza Come to Campus."

Located on the second floor of Jones Hall, the exhibit describes the events of 1918 at Tulane using a collection of photographs, original archival documents and artifacts.

Part of the exhibit describes Tulane's involvement in World War I. Large glass boxes hold original photos of military instructors, students in uniform, and Camp Martin, the 14-building military camp created to train student-soldiers for service.

"Almost every male student who registered became — or tried to become — a member of the Student Army Training Corps," said Case.

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Near the middle of the gallery, an assortment of newspaper clippings and letters describe the New Orleans influenza epidemic of 1918. The New Orleans Item reported several cases of influenza in Camp Martin and Newcomb College on Oct 1. In response to the epidemic, most students were quarantined, but those who weren't — Tulane's medical students — were sent out as doctors throughout Louisiana to help prevent more influenza deaths.

The exhibit also showcases original archival documents, telegrams and pictures that testify to Newcomb College's role in World War I efforts and its response to the influenza epidemic.

While the exhibit highlights Tulane's part in a citywide — and national — story, it also invites viewers to imagine being a student during this turbulent time. An excerpt from the Jambalaya 1919, written by a "class historian" in Tulane's medical program, illustrates the hopelessness felt by students after that hectic semester:

"We hope to graduate next year," the student said. "And we firmly believe that after this combination of experiences ... we shall be able to sail over the rest of Life's Solemn Main as easily and smoothly as a ship sails over a quiet sea."

The exhibit runs Monday to Friday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. in Jones Hall Room 205. It will close on Dec. 21.