

Papers of Mayor James Rolph

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Charge Board of Supervisors,
San Francisco, October 31, 1918.

THE PRESIDENT,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION I SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING FACTS. EPIDEMIC CONDITION OF INFLUENZA MANIFESTED ITSELF HERE OCTOBER SIX, WITH REPORT OF TWO HUNDRED CASES ON THAT DAY. THE NUMBER OF NEW CASES ROSE RAPIDLY TO OCTOBER 25 WHEN WE HAD 2004. OUR BOARD OF PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH DR. WILLIAM C. HASSLER, HEALTH OFFICER, ADVISED OCTOBER TWENTYETH THAT GAUZE MASKS BE WORN AS MEASURE TO PREVENT SPREAD. ON OCTOBER TWENTY ONE BY PROCLAMATION I CALLED UPON ALL CITIZENS TO WEAR MASKS. RED CROSS COOPERATED WITH ADVERTISEMENTS TO SAME EFFECT. ON THE TWENTY FIRST A FEW THOUSAND MASKS WERE GIVEN OUT BY RED CROSS AND WERE BEEN UPON THE STREETS STOP BACKING MY PROCLAMATION THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PASSED ORDINANCE ORDAINING UNIVERSAL WEARING OF MASKS. BY TWENTY THIRD PRACTICALLY WHOLE POPULATION WAS MASKED AND THOSE FAILING TO WEAR THEM BECAME CONSPICUOUS AND OBJECTS OF CRITICISM. THE EPIDEMIC BEGAN TO DECLINE FIVE DAYS AFTER FIRST MASKS WERE WORN AND THREE DAYS AFTER USE BECAME GENERAL AND PRACTICALLY OBLIGATORY AND ON THE SIXTH DAY NEW CASES DROPPED ABOUT HALF. DEATHS AT PEAK WERE 194 IN ONE DAY. YESTERDAY ONLY 103 AND INDICATIONS OF LESS NUMBER TODAY. HEALTH AUTHORITIES ATTRIBUTE DECLINE VERY LARGELY TO MASKS. OF COURSE EVERY OTHER MEASURE BEING TAKEN, VACCINE IS NOW BEING USED AND WE HOPE FOR FURTHER DECREASE. THESE FACTS ARE RESPECTFULLY PLACED BEFORE YOU BECAUSE WE BELIEVE MASKS HAVE SAVED VAST AMOUNT OF SUFFERING AND HUNDREDS OF LIVES. OUR HEALTH BOARD ACTED UPON ALL INFORMATION AVAILABLE AND SAN FRANCISCO WAS FIRST BIG CITY TO ADOPT UNIVERSAL WEARING. UNDERSTAND PORTLAND AND SEATTLE HAVE SINCE TAKEN SAME MEASURES. WITH EVERY GOOD WISH FROM SAN FRANCISCO.

JAMES ROLPH, JR.,

MAYOR OF SAN FRANCISCO.