

SANDYLAND CHRONICLE

THE FLU EPIDEMIC OF 1918

Many in this country have been battling influenza for the last several weeks. Many schools had to close due to illness and many deaths have been reported all across the country. This is a very serious strain of flu and the flu vaccine is not well suited to prevent it. Some say the vaccine is only 10 to 30 percent effective this time.

It's been 100 years since the nation experienced another very serious flu epidemic of what became known as the Spanish flu. It spread all around the globe and could be called a pandemic. A pandemic means a much greater number of people are infected and the disease if found is a much greater area than in an epidemic.

Some think the flu in 1918 began in a rural area in Kansas which had many poultry and hog farms. One of the things that helped it spread so fast was the fact that World War I was going on. The United States entered that war in 1917 and men were in camps being trained for warfare. When a man became sick, the disease was easily spread very quickly.

I spent a little time at the library looking through old Nevada County newspapers looking for any news stories about how the flu affected people in this area. I saw several obituaries of people with influenza mentioned as the cause of death or local news items about someone having the flu.

It appears that the disease mainly hit the Nevada County area in the fall of 1918. An article in *The Nevada News* (October 17, 1918) stated that the disease was nothing new—just the same old grip or la grippe that had been epidemic in 1889-90 and that there was no cause for panic. It stated that the epidemic of 1889-90 had begun in Russia. The article did have some recommendations of what to do if you contracted the flu—go to bed at the first symptom, eat nourishing food, remain quiet, and not to worry. It suggested that quinine, aspirin, or Dover's powders might be helpful. Vick's VapoRub was the medicine of choice back then. The article recommended using wet towels to cover the chest, throat, and back. Then spread Vick's salve over those parts of the body until the skin is red, and then cover it with two thicknesses of flannel.

Just a week later, the same paper reported that the disease was rapidly spreading in all parts of the country. In some communities, 20 to 33 percent of the population had the flu. It was worse in the East where there were thousands of victims. The age group most affected by this flu was healthy adults from age 20 to 40 plus anyone who was sickly or had other medical problems. People soon began to take this flu seriously and did their best to avoid it.

A week later the same paper reported that there was a nationwide shortage of Vick's VapoRub. Druggists were advised to only place small orders so that the company could send it to

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places where it was most needed. Other medicine companies placed ads in the paper boosting their particular potion as being helpful also.

In late October, 1918, the United States Public Health Service issued a prohibition for public gatherings such as funerals. The order stated, "It is positively forbidden to congregate at funerals under penalty of being prosecuted by the government. Only the immediate family, minister, pall bearers, and undertaker will be allowed to attend funerals until the quarantine is lifted." Mr. J. D. Cornish, the local undertaker at Prescott, advised that no funerals held at churches or at homes would be open to the public until order was received from the health department. The entire state was put under quarantine and all public schools were closed.

Camp Pike near Little Rock had 52,000 men there being trained for wartime duties. The epidemic hit that camp in early October, 1918 with 250 new cases. Soon the infirmary was admitting up to 1,000 per day and many were dying. The commander of the camp ordered that the names of the dead not be released.

Several articles in the papers gave advice on how to avoid the flu and how to treat it if a person became infected. Those instructions were the same back then as they are today--avoid being around sick people, avoid large crowds of people, keep your strength up by eating proper foods, get plenty of rest, etc. I didn't see any recommendation to wash your hands or cover your cough.

According to an article in the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture, about 7,000 Arkansans died from the 1918 influenza epidemic. The disease hit the cities first and then spread to the rural areas. Many deaths were unreported due to lack of communication and poor record keeping in those days. Sometimes entire families were sick and were unable to draw water and cook their own food. Many died from the disease or from thirst and starvation.

It is believed that the disease hit black families harder, especially sharecroppers, but the lack of good record keeping makes it hard to prove whether that is true or not.

According to that article, the disease became known as the Spanish flu because it had infected about seven million people in Spain. Spain was one of the few countries in Europe that did not censor the news during World War I and had better reporting than other countries. The disease was also known as "la grippe", a French phrase referring to the grip this disease had on the human body.

The war contributed greatly to the spread of this influenza. Soldiers were housed together in training camps and then transported on ships with close quarters where the disease could be easily spread. These troop transport ships became known as "floating caskets".

The influenza epidemic lasted through most of 1919. It killed 675,000 Americans. In Arkansas, there were about 7,000 deaths out of a population of 1.7 million. It is said that 25 percent of the population in the United States became infected. The Spanish flu infected about 500 million people world-wide and caused an estimated 50 million deaths, more than in the Black Death (probably bubonic plague) of the Middle Ages.

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Since then, we have had other flu epidemics. We've had the bird flu, the Hong Kong flu, the swine flu, and other milder strains. We are fortunate to have better medicines today than they had in 1918, but influenza is still a serious disease that causes many deaths mainly due to complications such as pneumonia.

Recently, I checked the cemetery records of Bluff City Cemetery in the area where I grew up and found a sharp increase in the number of deaths in 1918 more than likely due to this influenza epidemic. I was told that measles was also a problem at the same time in that area.

The flu epidemic also affected the election in November, 1918. Many people stayed home because they were afraid of being exposed to the flu.

The 1918 influenza epidemic took the lives of at least three Nevada County soldiers serving during World War I. Leonard Hamby of Prescott was the first Nevada County soldier to die in that war. Here is his story published in the October 24, 1918 issue of *The Nevada News*.

LEONARD HAMBY WORLD WAR I



Leonard C. Hamby was born in Prescott June 25, 1891 and died at the Soldier's Hospital in Chicago, IL October 14, 1918 of influenza which developed into bronchial-pneumonia.

With the first information of his illness, his mother and sister began the anxious journey to him, but God called him before they arrived.

He graduated the high school at Prescott and took a course in electrical engineering in the state university. He was an efficient electrician and resigned as manager of the Prescott water and light plant and volunteered ahead of his call to enter the service of his country. He is the first from the city of Prescott to make the supreme sacrifice.

While at Camp Pike in Motor Truck Co. 341, there came an order to Lt. R. R. Porterfield for 26 select men to be transferred to the troop transport train to proceed immediately for overseas service. On account of his courage, devotion to duty, and ability to perform the service required, he was among the first chosen. He, with the other twenty-five selectmen, reported to headquarters at Chicago to get trucks and the other men necessary to complete the company. He was apparently in perfect health—had never been sick nor absent from his post of duty. His fatal illness came without warning and lasted only four days. The War Dept. ordered his casket wrapped in the folds of the Stars and Stripes, and appointed a military escort to accompany the remains to Prescott, in the person of Cpl. Perry H. Machin, a member of his company who enlisted from North Little Rock, and he says that

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Leonard, as he was familiarly called in camp, had the respect, confidence, and love of all the company officers and privates. About three o'clock before his death, he realized his condition, and told those present that he was prepared. He had answered the call of his country. He was ready for the summons of his Maker. His greatest regret was that he could not get to the front in France. That the ruling passion is strong in death was verified in his case, for his last spoken words were as if on drill, "Shoulder Arms", "Forward, March", and other similar military orders.

He had been selected and commissioned for the most dangerous work connected with the great war, that of delivering ammunition to the soldiers in the trenches. In performing this task, he would have had to drive through barrages of gas and leaden shells, face machine gun fire from the air as well as from mask batteries in front with no protection or shield to him whatever. The fact that he was not at the front was no fault of his; he is entitled to just as much credit and honor as if he had met death on the firing line. Just before his death, he received his overseas uniform, in which he was buried, and was anxiously awaiting orders to sail. His heart was in the great cause for which he had enlisted, and the life given for such a cause is not lost. No, it a part of the indestructible foundation of our national edifice that stands for human liberty and freedom.

Leonard was a Mason, with his membership in the Blue Lodge Chapter and Commandery at Prescott and was buried at the D'Ann Cemetery with the honors of that ancient and honorable fraternity, and the Stars and Stripes, his country's flag, the dearest emblem to civilization, now floats over his grave.

It is not for us to understand the providence that took him in his young manhood. Some day we can know why. "Heaven gives its favorites an early death".

The hearts of those to whom he was dearest cry out for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still". Nature will assert itself when those whom we love are taken from us; but in that very love is the hope and promise of immortality.

"There is in love a consecrated power that seems to wake,
Only at the touch of death from its repose,
In the profoundest depths of thinking souls."

Signed by Thos. C. McRae and G. R. Haynie
(from the 10-24-1918 issue of *The Nevada News*)
(photo from his niece, Irma Hamby Evans)

Note: Business houses in Prescott closed in his honor for two hours during the funeral.

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GARLAND HARDWICK WORLD WAR I



---Son of J. M. and G. A. Hardwick; U. S. Navy; "He gave his life for liberty"—"A brave spirit lies buried here who died a glorious death in his country's cause" (from his grave marker)

Obit. - Garland Hardwick, aged 21 years, a member of the United States Navy, died in the naval hospital at Brooklyn, N. Y. December 22nd of bronchial pneumonia, and the remains arrived here last Monday and were carried to his home near Cale where funeral services were held. Interment was had at Macedonia Cemetery. *Note: The obit. had Macedonia Cemetery, but his marker is at Ebenezer Cem. near his family's home*. The deceased volunteered his services in the navy some time ago and had made a number of trips across on convoys accompanying troop transports. While he was enroute back to the United States a couple of weeks ago, he wrote his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jno. M. Hardwick, that he expected to be home shortly on furlough, but upon arriving in port at New York, he became ill with pneumonia and was taken to the hospital at Brooklyn, where he lived only a few days. (from the 1-2-1919 issue of *The Nevada News*)

JOSEPH HACKNEY WORLD WAR I

Joseph Hackney enlisted May 8, 1917 in the U. S. Navy. His rank was fireman-second class. He died in a Navy hospital in Philadelphia, PA from bronchial pneumonia. His next of kin was his mother, Mrs. Ella Hackney of Bluff City. (from a report of servicemen who died in World War I) He is buried at Bluff City Cemetery.

Garland Hardwick was 20 years old, Joseph Hackney was 22, and Leonard Hamby was 27 at the time of their death from the effects of influenza and pneumonia. They were healthy young men probably in peak physical condition and yet they could not overcome the effects from this terrible disease.

Hopefully, a vaccine can soon be found that will cover more of the various strains of influenza. At least now we have better medicines and better medical facilities than they had 100 years ago. Our ancestors had to deal with many other serious diseases such as smallpox, typhoid fever, measles, and polio. In some respects, the good old days were not all that good.

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PIONEER RESIDENT DESCRIBES THE EARLY DAYS

An old newspaper called *The Prescott Daily Mail* published a souvenir edition in 1947. They interviewed one of the older citizens of Prescott who was “threescore years and twenty” who claimed to knowing at one time “every man and dog in the county”. The man refused to allow his name to be published and the newspaper article identifies him as “Old Timer”. Here is the information “Old Timer” gave the newspaper reporter for the article.

“The pioneers worked for better conditions and laid the foundation for present day advantages. There is one feature of pioneer life that should not be overlooked, and that was the almost universal hospitality that prevailed.

The traveler was rarely denied the comforts of a night’s lodging no matter how humble the settler’s home might be. And no charge was ever made for accommodation.

In those days there were no hospitals, no trained nurses, no professional undertakers. If any of the settler’s family became ill, the neighbors were soon at the bedside. If death ensued, there was always someone who could fashion a crude coffin, and the deceased was followed to the cemetery by the entire community. The expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family were heartfelt and sincere.

If a family wanted to go on a visit for a week or more, they did not go in an automobile. The horses were harnessed or the oxen yoked and hitched up to the farm wagon. Someone in the neighborhood was always ready to volunteer to look after the house and do the chores during their absence.

One feature of pioneer life was the system of marking domestic animals for identification. In early days, there were few fences and all kinds of livestock were allowed to run at large. To protect himself against loss, the frontier farmer cropped the ears of his cattle, hogs, and sheep in a peculiar manner, and those marks were plain crop, the under and upper nits, the round hole, the swallow fork, and a few others. By a combination of these marks a settler could mark his animals. The marks were recorded at the courthouse.

“Old Timer” then discussed house-raising. He said, “Them was real days. After the settler had cut his logs and dragged them—probably by ox-team to the site of the proposed cabin, he sent invitations to his neighbors, some of whom lived at considerable distance to a “raising”. Nobody declined an invitation. When all were assembled, four men were chosen to “carry up the corners”. These men, each provided with a sharp ax, took their stations at the four corners of the cabin. As the logs were lifted up to them, they cut a notch in the underside and shaped a “saddle” upon the upper side, to receive the notch in the next log. The man having the “butt end” of the log was required to cut his notch a little deeper than the men having the top end in order that the walls might be kept on a level.

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This objective was aided by alternating the butt and top ends of the logs in each side and end of the structure. No openings were left for doors and windows, these being cut out afterwards. Sometimes these openings were made by the owner of the cabin, but in many instances they were cut out by those who assisted in raising the house. At one end an opening would be made for the fireplace, just outside of which would be built a chimney of stone, or, if stone was not convenient, of sticks and clay. In front of the fireplace was a hearth of flat stones, a single stone occasionally being large enough to answer the purpose.

The roof was invariably of clapboards, or shakes, split or rived from straight-grained timber with an implement called a "frow". The floor—where there was any except Mother Earth—was "puncheons"; that is slabs of timber split as near the same thickness as possible, the upper surface being smoothed with an "adz" after the floor was laid. Nails were a luxury and not infrequently a house would be built without a single article of iron being used in its construction. A door of thin puncheons would be fastened to cross battens with wooden pins and provided with wooden hinges and a wooden latch. To lift the latch from the outside, a thong of deerskin was passed through a small hole in the door. At night the thong was pulled inside and the door locked. This giving rise to the expression "the latchstring is always out" which was an invitation to come at any time. The clapboards forming the roof were held in place by poles which were fastened to the end logs of the cabin by wooden pins. Lastly, the cracks between the logs were "chinked" with pieces of timber and plastered with clay, or a mortar of lime and sand.

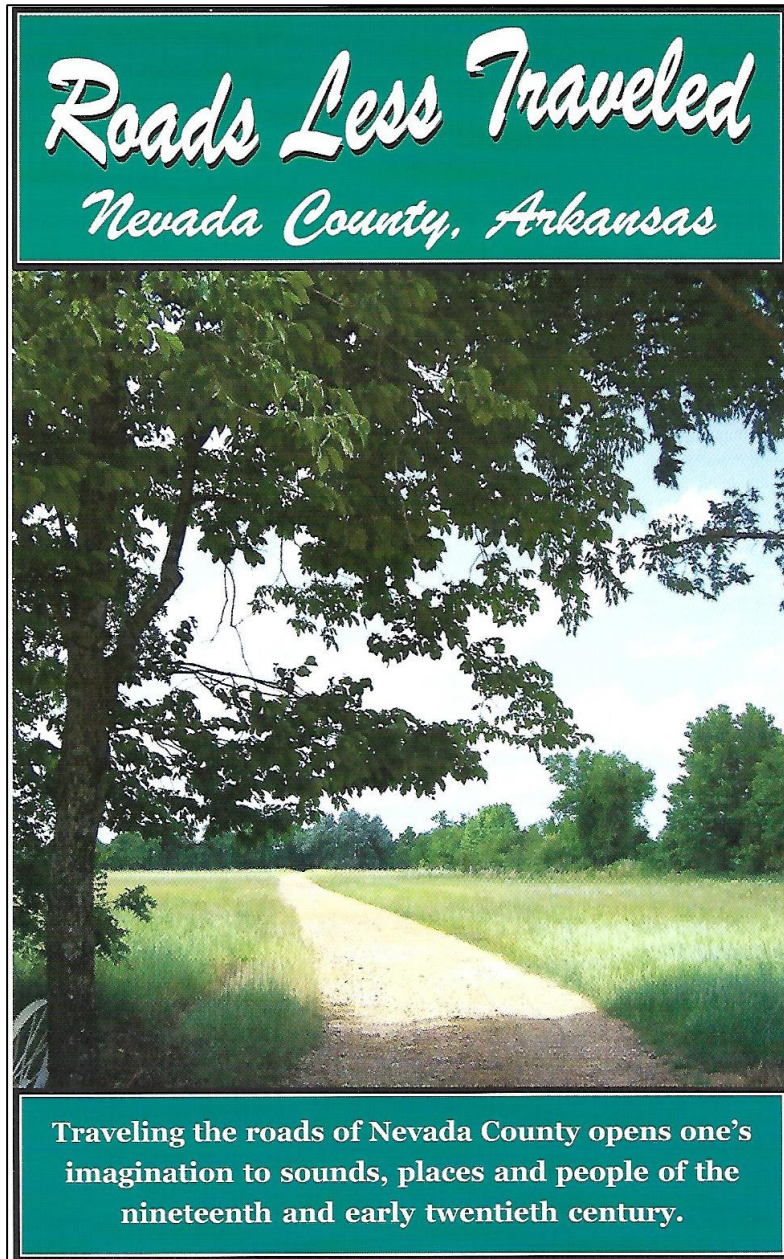
The "house-warming" that followed a house-raising was the best part of it all. A new cabin wasn't considered fit to live in until it had been properly dedicated. In nearly every settlement in the early day there was at least one man who could play the violin. The fiddler was called and the new dwelling would become the scene of revelry by night, and there was usually a jug or two which added enjoyment to the entertainment.

Many times the orchestra consisted of first and second fiddle, and possibly a banjo, the musicians, when more than one, being Negroes. On such occasions there was not heard tango, foxtrot or hesitation waltz, but the Virginia reel, the stately minuet, or the old fashioned cotillion, in which someone called the turns in a loud, musical voice, was much in evidence."

WEATHER REPORT

The year 2018 got off to a very cold start. We had low temperatures around 3 to 5 degrees which is unusually cold for this area. We also had a nice snow in January ranging anywhere from three to six inches depending on the location. I received 3.5 inches of rainfall at my house plus about three inches of snow.

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Copies of this small booklet called "Roads Less Traveled" are available in the genealogy room at the Nevada Co. library in Prescott and probably at the Depot Musuem. It includes articles and pictures about the Nevada County Depot Museum, Elkin's Ferry, Cornelius Farm, Prairie D'Ane, Moscow church, Ephesus Cemetery, Emmet Methodist Church, Serepta Springs, Mount Moriah Church, Wortham Gymnasium at Oak Grove, the Camden-Washington Road, Carolina Church, Nick Trammell's Inn, Sutton, Arkansas, Falcon, Arkansas, and Watts Cemetery.