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Spanish Influenza in Missouri

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic is the second influenza pandemic to hit the United States. In 1918 and 1919 the Spanish Flu raged across the globe in three waves. The first from March to June 1918 is thought to have begun in Haskell County, Kansas. It soon spread as young men from the county were drafted and sent to Camp Funston at Fort Riley. Then, mysteriously, the flu vanished. The second-wave of the pandemic, from August 1918 to March 1919, spread quickly and violently with the most lethal in ten weeks from mid-September through the end of December 1918. Schools were closed, all public gatherings (including funerals) were cancelled, people were urged to stay home, hospitals were full of influenza patients. A third wave swept through in April 1919 and lasted through early summer. It was less deadly but no less devastating in Missouri. In the United States, 675,000 American civilians and 48,000 servicemen died in the pandemic. The total number of deaths in Missouri is difficult to estimate, however it is likely that approximately 15,000 Missourians lost their lives.

The Covid-19 pandemic is the second influenza pandemic to hit the United States. How does it compare to “Spanish Influenza” that raged across the globe a century ago? Was your family affected? Chances are good that it was. The disease took on many names including “Spanish Influenza,” “Spanish Lady,” “La Grippe” or simply the “Grip.” While it affected virtually every family on earth there is little memory of it today. Residents of the State of Missouri were not spared. What happened to your ancestors? How did their communities deal with the disease?

One of the surest ways to discover what happened is to read the newspapers your ancestors did. During the early part of the twenty-first century, most news spread via two methods: word of mouth and newspapers. In many cities including St. Louis and Kansas City there were competing newspapers while in others such as Columbia, newspapers had morning and evening editions. Some Missouri counties had no major newspaper, but residents took a weekly edition of the *Kansas City Star* through the mail. Regardless of where your ancestor lived in the state, they likely learned about the pandemic in part via the local paper. This article contains insights from around the state found primarily in newspapers at www.newspapers.com and Digital Missouri Heritage.¹ It will review the

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all documentation was accessed on Missouri Digital Heritage at <https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/>.



RomaMARYGrace

circumstances leading up to the pandemic, describe how the disease progressed and share some stories of heroic efforts and successes in the State of Missouri, as well as devastating losses.

Setting the Scene: 1917-1918

World War I began on July 28, 1914, but the United States remained neutral until April 6, 1917. War brought dramatic changes to American life with new government organizations regulating everything from transportation to food distribution and conservation. Young men were required to register for the draft for the first time since the Civil War and citizens were asked to fund the war effort. In order to raise the funds, public events such as parades were held and participation considered your patriotic duty. Large public gatherings such as the “Liberty Loan” parade held in Columbia on September 28, 1918, where 2,000 citizens marched and thousands more watched, would aid in the spreading of influenza.²

In support of the war effort, Americans were on the move. Men were heading to training camps, then to the coast to board troop ships for France, where 200,000 Americans were arriving each month by summer 1918. Women were replacing men in the workforce and visiting them in camps when possible. Most Missouri trainees headed to Camp Funston at Fort Riley, Kansas, one of the largest of the camps in the U.S. This movement would help spread influenza. No one knew how long the war would last. What many understood, however; was that without hundreds of thousands of fresh American soldiers, the allies were unlikely to defeat Germany. With our ancestors’ attention focused on winning the war, Spanish Influenza crept into their lives.

When the Flu Arrived: Three Waves of Fear and Death

My own family was directly and dramatically affected by the pandemic. My grandfather Carl C. Siegel and his wife Mary, who lived in Florence (Morgan County), Missouri, came down with the flu in the spring of 1919. Unfortunately, luck was against them and Mary Virginia (DeHaven) Siegel succumbed on April 1, 1919; leaving Carl with three young boys to raise on his own.

Carl and Mary’s is not an unusual story. Families worldwide were sickened and traumatized by Spanish Influenza. The disease came in three waves. The first from March to June 1918 is thought to have begun in Haskell County, Kansas. It soon spread as young

² Evening Missourian. 28 Sep 1918, 1.



RomaMARYGrace

men from the county were drafted and sent to Camp Funston where at least 500 soldiers fell ill and forty-eight died. Then mysteriously the flu vanished.

The illness reappeared after more than 100,000 American troops landed in Europe. There were very few American cases of flu in France; rather the virus began moving across Europe through Spain, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. China also reported flu cases. The illness took on the name “Spanish Flu” because Spain was neutral and was not under wartime censorship. The new potent form of influenza was openly reported in its newspapers and the news quickly spread abroad and the name stuck. Because of documented cases, most scientists and historians now believe that it originated in Kansas and spread with the movement of soldiers from Camp Funston.³

The second-wave of the epidemic, from August 1918 to March 1919, spread quickly and violently with the most lethal in ten weeks from mid-September through the end of December. In one sector of the Western Front over 70,000 American troops were hospitalized and nearly one third of the men died. The disease was noted at Camp Devens in Massachusetts by early September and reported in Missouri newspapers. On September 15, 1918, the Springfield newspaper reported “No Flu Here” but reports of Missourians dying elsewhere began appearing in local papers across the state. Jefferson Barracks was placed under quarantine when Spanish Influenza appeared in late September. St. Louis did not see civilian cases until October 7th. By the end of September newspapers across the country report more than 20,000 cases of influenza at Army camps, with a total number of inflicted over 72,000. Influenza was moving through the Army and to the civilian population.

On October 1, 1918, local newspapers reported that twenty percent of Kansas City’s army training schools had contracted influenza.⁴ Forty-three civilian cases had appeared, with thirty-three of them under isolation. On the same day, the front page of the *Kansas City Times* reported war news including “Cholera in Berlin” but no mention of Spanish Influenza in Kansas City. Readers had to turn to Page Seven among the death notices to discover Kansas City had experienced its first influenza death.⁵ Two days later, again on Page Seven, the *Times* reported that the “spread of the contagious disease was not

³ Several other theories exist regarding where the virus originated including France and China. John M. Barry details his findings in *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*. London: Penguin, 2010.

⁴ “Kansas City, Missouri.” University of Michigan, Influenza Encyclopedia. Accessed online at www.influenzaarchive.org.

⁵ “First Influenza Death Here.” *Kansas City Times*. 1 Oct 1918, 7.



RomaMARYGrace

alarming” but physicians were required to report potential cases and thus the city’s numbers were going to increase.⁶ By mid-month the *Kansas City Star* would proclaim, “A Drastic Ban Is On” announcing closures in Kansas City.

The wildfire of influenza that spread across Missouri is evident in newspapers. In early October, the Springfield Mayor announced the closing of schools, theaters and all public gatherings including funerals. On October 5th, the *Springfield Daily Republican* reported the first flu-related death in Springfield, MO; seven days later the newspaper was filled with obituaries.

From October 1st to November 7th, the *Joplin Globe* reported 386 cases of flu and pneumonia with 64 deaths.⁷ By October 25, seven Joplin physicians had come down with influenza and/or pneumonia.⁸

By October 8, seventy cases of influenza had been recorded at the University of Missouri. Classes were canceled beginning on October 7th and movement barred around the campus.⁹ The football season was cancelled for the first and only time in University of Missouri’s history. On the front page of the *Evening Missourian* influenza was mentioned fifteen times, while simultaneously noting that the 4th Liberty Loan was a continued success, raising \$83 million nationwide overnight, bringing the total to more than \$1.4 billion.¹⁰ In less than a week a daily count of influenza cases would mar the front page.

In St. Louis, Mayor Henry Kiel issued a decree closing all theaters, moving picture shows, schools, pool and billiard halls, Sunday schools, cabarets, lodges, societies, public funerals, open air meetings, dance halls and conventions. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* declared on October 15th that “69 Have Died Here From Influenza.” On the following day 600 new cases were reported in the city.¹¹ The evening papers of October 19, 1918, reported that Missouri had more than 10,000 cases of influenza. Springfield, Kansas City and St. Louis

⁶ Kansas City Times. 3 Oct 1918, 7.

⁷ *The Joplin Globe*. 21 Mar 2020, 1, accessed on 8 May 2020 at https://www.joplinglobe.com/news/local_news/joplin-in-the-grippe-remembering-the-spanish-flu-epidemic-of/article_e93531bc-2209-59e1-b1f4-7f1b0122e05e.html.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The Evening Missourian. 8 Oct 1918. 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ FluTrackers News and Information. “The Great Pandemic of 1918: State by State.” Accessed May 17, 2020. <https://flutrackers.com/forum/welcome-to-the-scientific-library/-1918-pandemic-data-stories-history/14750-the-great-pandemic-of-1918-state-by-state>.



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represented the greatest number, with Springfield being the hardest hit with more than 3,000.¹²

By the end of October 1918, more than 21,000 Missourians had been stricken. Even as the Armistice was declared on November 11, 1918, fear rose that the devastating illness would never end and that the world would never recover. Influenza cases continued to be reported through the end of 1918 and on Christmas Eve, my grandfather Carl Siegel received word that his twenty-six year old cousin, Elizabeth N. Draffen, daughter of John and Anna (Siegel) Draffen, died of influenza.¹³ Elizabeth was a school teacher in Versailles, Missouri.

As 1919 began cases surged across the state including Forsyth, MO, where sixty cases were reported on January 3rd.¹⁴ Finally, as spring emerged the number of flu cases waned to only a few. The worst was over.

A third wave swept in April 1919 and lasted through early summer. It was less deadly but no less devastating in Missouri. The January 8th *Columbia Missourian* reported that more than 20,000 Missourians were sick with influenza and 139 deaths in the previous week.¹⁵ On January 16, 1920, the federal census enumerator recorded the family of Fountain Pieratt Jones, his wife Mattie Lee (Boothe) and their daughters Lillian L (age 8) and Helen M (age 6) in Hallsville in Boone County.¹⁶ In less than a month, influenza would take the mother from the young family. In nearby Columbia, hospitals were nearing capacity with influenza patients. The following week sororities at Mizzou turned their houses into hospitals for influenza patients.

¹² The Evening Missourian. 19 Oct 1918. 3.

¹³ Missouri State Archives. "Missouri Death Certificate Database, 1910-1969." Database, Missouri Digital Heritage. Image. Elizabeth M. Draffen, #47660, (<https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/>: accessed 11 May 2020)

¹⁴ Springfield News Leader. 3 Jan 1919, 8.

¹⁵ Columbia Missourian. 8 Jan 1920, 1.

¹⁶ Ancestry.com. "1920 United States Federal Census," database, Ancestry.com

[https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=6061&h=51466057&tid=e&pid=e&usePUB=true#?_phcmd=u\('https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/35/?name%3Dfountain_jones%26event%3D1920_boone-missouri-usa_338%26count%3D50%26successSource%3DSearch%26queryId%3Dd37766b2aff25d43160d7faa87fe1abf,'successSource\)](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=6061&h=51466057&tid=e&pid=e&usePUB=true#?_phcmd=u('https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/35/?name%3Dfountain_jones%26event%3D1920_boone-missouri-usa_338%26count%3D50%26successSource%3DSearch%26queryId%3Dd37766b2aff25d43160d7faa87fe1abf,'successSource) :) : accessed on 4 May 2020, entry from Fountain Jones (b. 1882), Rocky Fork, Boone, Missouri, District 30, sheet 5A citing Roll T625_906.



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**DRUGGISTS STILL ASKED TO
CONSERVE STOCKS OF VAPORUB
NEEDED IN "FLU" DISTRICTS**

**Flu Board Declares War
on Coughers, Sneezers,
and Spitters.**

CAUTION

LaGrippe or Influenza

Use plenty of Farmer's Ginger Ale-Aromatic. Made with Famosa Sterilized Water, which means "germ proof," ginger, pure cane sugar an aromatics.

ORDER BY THE CASE

Electric Bottling Co.

PHONE 722.

FREE WAR MAPS

AVOID INFLUENZA

If you have that cold and "achey" feeling, look out for La Grip, (sometimes called Influenza).

Take Ferguson's Cold and Grippe Tablets.

Virginia Pharmacy
109 South Ninth Street.

DON'T SHAKE HANDS

**It's a Good Way to Pass On the In-
fluenza Germs.**

Spanish Influenza advice found in Missouri newspapers

In Southwest Missouri, schools closed in January and February 1920 with 1,647 sick in Springfield. At the same time tragedy struck in the Southeast. Fred W. and Mary L. (Taylor) Hanebrink of Egypt Mills lost five children within fourteen days in February 1920. Twenty-one year old Roy R. was the first to die on February 2, followed by siblings Elmo C., age sixteen (Feb 5); Erna V., age fourteen (Feb 5); Victor W., age eight, (Feb 8) and Leona M., age six (Feb 15).¹⁷ Upon announcing the death of Roy, the *Southeast Missourian*

¹⁷ The five Hanebrink children have death certificates in the Missouri Death Certificate Database, however; all have incorrectly spelled last names. See Missouri State Archives. "Missouri Death Certificate Database, 1910-1969." Database, Missouri Digital Heritage (<https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/>; accessed 11 May 2020), entry for Leona Harebrink (#5178), Roy (#5162), Victor (#5165), Erna (#5164) and Elmo Honebrink (#5163).



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noted on February 3rd that eight additional family members were ill with influenza; highlighting that most likely everyone in the family was ill.¹⁸ The couple, along with their twelve-year old son Thurman and six-year old son and twin of Leona, Leland survived. One older child, Lovie had married in 1915.

Today scholars and experts believe that as many as one third of the global population was sickened between 1918 and 1920. While the gravest part was the ten week period between mid-September and early December 1918, many places were hit earlier and or later. Over 350,000 American deaths were recorded by early December 1918.¹⁹

Healthcare, Patriotism, and Volunteerism

In 1918 influenza was not unknown, yet Spanish Influenza arrived quickly and was extraordinarily deadly. Unlike previous flu outbreaks, fifty percent of deaths were people between the ages of twenty and forty. Ninety-nine percent were under sixty-five. Some of the symptoms were unusual and therefore the disease was mistaken for tuberculosis, typhus, and cholera. It was known that spitting and sneezing were primary transmitters. So our ancestors learned to “social distance” through banning of public gatherings and quarantines, but sound advice was sometimes hard to come by. On August 17, 1918, the *Springfield News Leader* ran an Associated Press headline on page two that quoted the New York City Department of Health Commissioner Royal Copeland as saying: “To Avoid Influenza Use a Handkerchief in Kissing.”²⁰

On October 4th the U.S. Public Health Service advised state and local officials to enforce closure of all public gathering places because it does not have the authority to do so.²¹ On the same day, Chicago held a Liberty Bond parade advising Chicagoans to go home afterward, strip, rub the body dry and take a laxative!

¹⁸ Roy R. Hanebrink, memorial 40485364. Photo of *The Southeast Missourian*. 3 Feb 1920. Accessed on findagrave.com on 11 May 2020.

¹⁹ “Flu More Deadly Than War.” *Chicago Tribune*. 4 Dec 1918.

²⁰ *Springfield News Leader*. 17 August 1918, 2; accessed on newspapers.com.

²¹ Alfred Crosby, *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 [reprint], 74.



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What further strained medical care was that nearly one-half of all medical personnel in the Missouri had been sent to war.²² Many areas of the country were left with no doctors

or only a few that would try to attend an overwhelming number of the sick and dying. In Macon County, Missouri, the *Bevier Appeal* reported on October 18, 1918, that as the number of cases of flu continued to climb locally, the Board of Health adopted a plan to divide the county geographically into thirds between doctors. The article explained that “If the epidemic should rage here as it has in the east, it would be impossible for doctors to answer specific calls, often in extreme portions of the city without causing other patients to suffer needlessly.”²³ Citizens were asked to sacrifice their desire to see their chosen doctor; rather they were to call the town’s telephone operators who would direct the call appropriately. “Bevier is under ‘doctor law’ instead of martial law,” the article reported; and everyone was asked to do their “patriotic and civic duty” to comply with the order.

In St. Louis, the Red Cross adopted a similar system dividing St. Louis into districts and assigned health department nurses and volunteers to

**A Woman’s Touch
Can Save St. Louis Lives!**

St. Louis is in danger unless you can help.
The City Health Department and the Red Cross make this urgent appeal to the women of this city for aid.

Influenza is prevalent in the city.
All women who know anything about nursing are needed now to take the place of the nurses who have gone to war.

Although the death rate is low, there are a large number of cases where nursing is necessary.
Many homes are without help.
Without your aid many citizens of St. Louis will die of NEGLECT and not of influenza.
We need you today.
Register now for service in the following:

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Practical Nurses. | Graduate Nurses. |
| Cooks, Maids, Nurse Girls. | Aids to Nurses. |
| and all types of domestic service. | |

You will receive pay for your services.
Register at 1005 Frisco Bldg. Phone Olive 7300, Central 6900.

Employers should release all women employes having nursing experience or knowledge.

Help St. Louis Meet This Crisis
**ST. LOUIS DIVISION OF HEALTH,
DEPARTMENT PUBLIC WELFARE**
**ST. LOUIS CHAPTER
AMERICAN RED CROSS**

This announcement is donated in the interest of the health and life of St. Louisans by:

| | |
|---|---|
| CENTRAL STATES LIFE INSURANCE CO. | |
| ROBT. C. NEWMAN, General Agent, Missouri State Life Ins. Co. | JULIUS LANGSDORF, Special Agent, Northwestern Mutual Life Ins. Co. |

St. Louis Post Dispatch, 6 Dec 1918

²² D.S. McKinsey, J.P. McKinsey, and M. Enriquez. “Part I: The 1918 Influenza in Missouri: Centennial Remembrance of the Crisis.” *Missouri Medicine* 2018;115 (3):183-188.

²³ *Bevier Appeal*. 18 Oct 1918, 1.



RomaMARYGrace

each.²⁴ The St. Louis Chapter also sent nurses to Jefferson Barracks and small towns throughout the state to aid in the fight against the flu.

In Columbia, three University of Missouri buildings (Read Hall, Pi Kappa Alpha house & Kappa Sigma house) were used as hospitals to supplement the two others in the city – Parker Memorial and the city hospital. In addition, the city placed many private homes under quarantine when it became known that the inhabitants were stricken with flu. A Home Service Bureau was established to care for the home-bound patients. The number of patients ebbed and flowed through November and December. On November 29, ninety-seven new cases were reported. By December 6, 1918, the University of Missouri closed to prevent further outbreak, as the city closed schools, courts, and public administration services while reinstating a ban on meetings and limiting the number of patrons in a store to no more than six at one time.

With all the sick unable to care for themselves or others, a call went out for volunteers to nurse, as well as cooking and cleaning for those who were too sick to do so. Women studying at University of Missouri stepped up to the challenge. When three make-shift hospitals were opened on campus, ninety-eight female students answered the call for volunteer nurses, working eight to twelve hour shifts daily.²⁵ Many of the University women had no prior training, but learned on the job. Their success rate was so high they were sent to assist at the other Columbia hospitals. By mid-December 1,020 cases of influenza were cared for by all Missouri University hospitals.²⁶ The Red Cross chapter at the University made hundreds of masks and sold them for ten cents each at Jesse Hall. In Columbia, influenza cases waned again in early 1919, only to rise again in January 1920.

²⁴ Marian Moser Jones. "The American Red Cross and local response to the 1918 influenza pandemic: a four-city case study." *Public Health Report* 2010;125 3 (Suppl 3):92-104.

doi:10.1177/00333549101250S312.

²⁵ "M.U. Girls Show Mettle in Influenza Epidemic." *The Evening Missourian*. 23 Oct 1918. 3.

²⁶ "Emergency Hospitals Close." *Evening Missourian*. 14 Dec 1918, 1.



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MU Red Cross Nurses, 1918, Savitar (University of Missouri Yearbook)

The state's two largest cities struggled to cope with the onslaught. St. Louis City Hospital treated 17,685 cases of influenza with 3,192 deaths between April 1, 1918 and March 31, 1919. The death rate in St. Louis was 2.8 per 1,000 residents, lowest among the nation's major cities.²⁷ From its first documented case on September 27, 1918 to spring 1919, Kansas City had over 11,000 cases and over 2,300 deaths.²⁸ As a result, Kansas City experienced an excess death rate of 580 per 100,000 people, placing it among one of the harder-hit cities in the United States. It is the only major city in the United States to close its schools three times during the pandemic.²⁹

Elsewhere in the state, public and private institutions worked with their limited resources. The Superintendent of the Missouri State Hospital in Fulton reported between 400 and 500 cases in the final three months of 1918 as well as the dearth of competent nurses and medical attendants given the "small amount we are able to pay them."³⁰ In Cape Girardeau the Normal School (present day Southeast Missouri State University) rented a building for a temporary hospital where approximately one hundred SATC cadets were attended through the fall of 1918 and reportedly succeeded without a single loss of life.³¹

²⁷ Marian Moser Jones. 92-104.

²⁸ Annual Report of the Hospital and Health Board of Kansas City, Missouri for the Year Ending April 21st, 1919. Kansas City, 1919, 22, accessed online at <http://www.influenzaarchive.org/cities/city-kansascity.html#>.

²⁹ University of Michigan, *Influenza Encyclopedia*. Accessed online at www.influenzaarchive.org.

³⁰ Superintendent Report, Missouri State Hospital, Fulton, 1919. 1919 House and Senate Journal, Appendix, Volume 3, State Hospital, Fulton Report, 13.

³¹ "Cape Girardeau Normal School Report, Missouri General Assembly, 1919." 1919 House and Senate Journal, Appendix, Volume 3, State Normal School, Cape Girardeau Report, 14.



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Many smaller towns and rural areas were left to fend for themselves. In Missouri they were hit hard particularly in later waves. On November 7th, the Van Buren *Current Local* newspaper stated that the Spanish influenza had “been raging for the past two weeks in Ellsinore and vicinity. There have been over 100 cases and several deaths reported.”³² After naming some of the victims of the disease and expressing his sympathy with the families, the editor continued,

Let us hope this dreadful epidemic will soon disappear from our community. As to the sick ones here (Van Buren), it is impossible to try to name all of them. There are several instances where whole families are sick in bed at one time as 'ye correspondent' and wife and two boys were all down at once with the malady, we are in position to know how it goes. Both local doctors here have been on the go both day and night. Just at present we know of no real serious cases, and from what we can learn about it, the situation seems to be improving some.³³

U.S. Soldiers fighting the war in Europe did not fare better. Influenza was the cause of death for half of the U.S. soldiers who died in Europe. An estimated 43,000 servicemen mobilized for WWI died of influenza while 621,000 were sickened.³⁴ On October 18, 1918, Bert Edward Mothersbaugh, Fireman First Class, United States Navy, died of influenza at Naval Hospital in Mare Island, CA. He was transferred to the hospital on October 4 from the USS Boggs. Bert grew up in Syracuse, Missouri and volunteered for the U.S. Navy when the U.S. entered the war. Bert's brother, Lewis A. Mothersbaugh married Maria Raiffeisen, my great-grand aunt. On the same day Bert died, Mary V. (DeHaven) Siegel wrote a letter to her sister-in-law in Kansas City asking about conditions there and saying that a few influenza cases had been reported in Syracuse (Morgan County) where they lived.

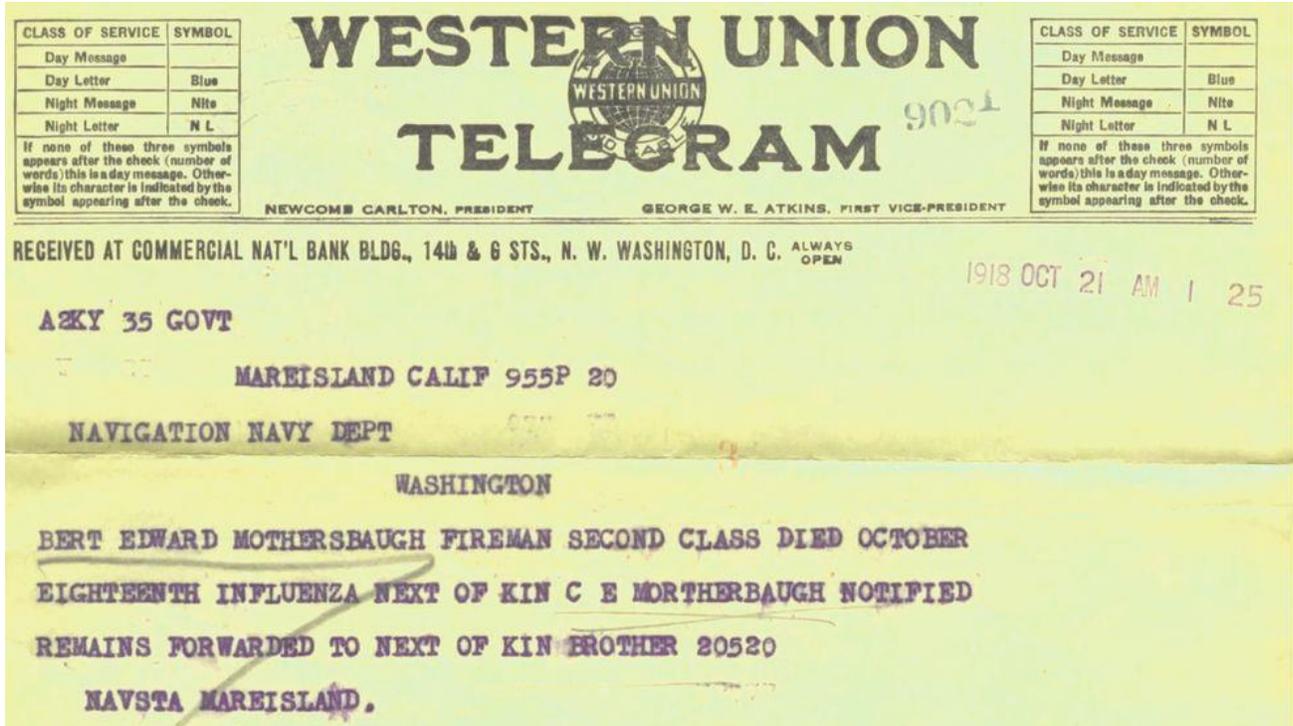
³² The Current Local. 7 Nov 1918, 1.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Alfred Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 [reprint], 205.



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Telegram Confirming Death of Bert E. Mothersbaugh, USN, of Influenza, 18 Oct 1918.
He was from Syracuse, MO.

Many of the stories above have a familiar ring. While our ancestor's didn't use the terminology "social distancing" they were asked to stay at home, to refrain from sneezing or spitting in public and to help care for their fellow citizens. Public spaces were closed and shops had to limit the number of customers. Anyone who lived through the influenza pandemic was never the same even if the illness did not sicken a family member. Spanish Influenza was remembered for the whirlwind of chaos it caused and for those that were lost. As Mary Virginia Siegel lay dying on April 1, 1919, her last words were, "self-sacrifice is a great winning." She was 29 years old. Her countenance is the middle photo in my business logo RomaMaryGrace.

In the United States, 675,000 American civilians and 48,000 servicemen perished during the pandemic that ran its course from spring 1918 to summer 1920.³⁵ The total number of

³⁵ Different timelines exist for the outbreak and duration of the flu. For genealogical purposes I define three waves based upon my newspaper, death certificate and scientific study research. Scientists generally limit the flu to 1918-1919, but newspapers across the globe cite its resurgence in early 1920 and thus, my timeline includes this period.



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deaths in Missouri from Spanish Influenza is difficult given the variety of symptoms and diagnoses, overwhelmed doctors and nurses as well as the uneven waves of the disease. However it is likely that approximately 15,000 Missourians lost their lives. For genealogists this means that our ancestors may have died from the specific virus that caused the two year pandemic, but the death certificate, newspaper notice or family memory may not show it. Newspapers can highlight the stories of misinformation, goofy advice in the face of the unknown and the tragedy our ancestors endured. But we also find many examples of heroism, sacrifice, community mobilization and triumph over the odds. Perhaps through these we can find hope during our current struggle with Covid-19.

About the author:

Michelle L. Spencer, owner of RomaMaryGrace Historical Research, has been a speaker, writer, and professional genealogist for six years, in addition to conducting her own family research for 30+ years. Her clients include television shows *Who Do You Think You Are?* and *Finding Your Roots*. She has co-authored more than 25 Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. She has written and spoken extensively on genealogy, military history, local, regional and international issues.

The Spanish Influenza Pandemic is one of her primary research interests because of its direct effect on her family. She has done extensive research on the era, the disease and its genealogical outcomes. Checkout her website at <https://romamarygrace.com/> for more information on Spanish Flu, as well as other genealogical and historical issues. Michelle is open to new clients, writing and speaking opportunities and is available for in person and virtual means, if necessary. She lives in Millbrook, AL with her husband. She can be contacted by email romamarygrace@gmail.com.