



RomaMaryGrace

1918-1920 Influenza Pandemic Timeline

1917

April. US entered the war.

June. First draft 500,000.

3 Oct. Local men from Springfield, Missouri, drafted; go to train in Camp Funston in Kansas.

1918

Jan-Feb. In January and February of 1918 Dr. Loring Miner of Haskell County, in the very southwestern corner of Kansas, reported and described the year's first influenza cases of unusual severity. It is virtually certain that young men leaving Haskell County for military service at Camp Funston in eastern Kansas carried the virus with them.

Jan-Feb. Flu reported in New York City starting in February 1918, and possibly earlier in Louisville, Kentucky.

March. 84,000 US Troops were transported from training camps across the United States to port cities on the eastern seaboard where they boarded ships to Europe.

March 11. At Camp Funston (on Fort Riley), Kansas, an Army private reported to the camp hospital just before breakfast complaining of fever, sore throat, and headache. By noon, the camp's hospital had over 100 soldiers. By week's end that number was 500. 48 soldiers died and then the flu seemed to vanish.

April. Number of U.S. soldiers transported to Europe: 118,000.

5 Apr. First mention of influenza appears in an April 5 weekly public health report. The report informs officials of 18 severe cases and three deaths in Haskell, Kansas.

June. Second draft. Army begins training recruits at 32 large camps, each housing 25,000 to 55,000 soldiers. Newspaper reports of influenza in Germany, China, Spain, Denmark, Romania and France. All blamed on Germany.

July

14 July. *New York Times* reported influenza did not come from Spain, rather from Germany due to hunger and consequential exhaustion.

Public health officials in Philadelphia issue a bulletin about the so-called Spanish influenza. In London, 700 influenza deaths are reported in the month of July.

August

17 Aug. Women are advised in the *Springfield Daily Republican* (MO) that to avoid getting the flu, one should kiss her soldier through a handkerchief.

➔ **19 Aug.** *New York Times* first publication of American soldiers' deaths overseas due to influenza.

22 Aug. The *Springfield Daily Republican* noted the existence of a strange epidemic of a peculiar type of flu in the eastern United States that attacks only those who are run down.

27 Aug. Naval Stations & factory towns on East Coast report multiple cases of flu.



September

5 Sep. The Massachusetts Department of Health alerts area newspapers that an epidemic is underway. Dr. John S. Hitchcock of the state health department warned that "unless precautions are taken the disease in all probability will spread to the civilian population of the city."

U.S. Surgeon General Rupert Blue of the United States Public Health Service dispatches advice to the press on how to recognize the influenza symptoms. Blue prescribed bed rest, good food, salts of quinine, and aspirin for the sick. Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Philip Doane, head of the Health and Sanitation Section of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, speaking in Washington, D.C., fuels the rumor and speculation by blaming the Germans for the deadly influenza that was striking Americans. Said Doane: "It would be quite easy for one of these German agents to turn loose Spanish influenza germs in a theater or some other place where large numbers of persons are assembled. The Germans have started epidemics in Europe, and there is no reason why they should be particularly gentle with America."

➔ 7 Sep. First reported case of flu at Camp Devens near Boston. Eleven days later 1,000 reported sick. Dr. Victor Vaughn, acting Surgeon General of the Army, arrives at Devens where he sees "hundreds of young stalwart men in uniform coming into the wards of the hospital. Every bed was full, yet others crowded in. The faces wore a bluish cast; a cough brought up the blood-stained sputum. In the morning, the dead bodies are stacked about the morgue like cordwood."

15th Sep. 3rd draft. Springfield, MO newspaper: "No Flu Here." Two days later the paper reported that in Boston 16 died in 6 hours from influenza. The Navy Radio School at Harvard University reported first cases of influenza among the young men studying radio communications. One of those men who died is Ewald Mense, from Washington, MO. His death notice on the front page of the *Franklin County Observer* on 27 Sept 1918 states that he died of pneumonia after "over study and diligence to the tasks at hand weakened his physical condition."

18 Sep. Flu reported in Camp Devens (MA), Camp Lee (VA), and Camp Upton (NY). By the end of September, more than 14,000 flu cases are reported at Camp Devens—equaling about one-quarter of the total camp, resulting in 757 deaths.

Philadelphia reported its first civilian death.

19 Sep. 41 deaths reported in 24 hours in New England; the next day the number rose to 120.

24 Sep. Dr. William Hassler, Chief of San Francisco's Board of Health had gone so far as to predict that the flu would not even reach the city, while the *Springfield News-Leader* (MO) paper details the first local man to die in training at the Great Lakes Naval Station.

27 Sep. The Public Health Service began requiring states to report cases of flu. In Kansas City, local newspapers reported that the commandant of the motor corps had placed the two schools under a strict quarantine after it became apparent that the few cases that had developed among trainees several days earlier had now become a serious outbreak. Nearly 1,000 student soldiers in the two corps now had the disease. Simultaneously, three young civilian women living at the Girls' Club showed symptoms of the disease after having visited one of the motor corps several days prior.

28 Sep. 200,000 gather for a 4th Liberty Loan Drive in Philadelphia. Days after the parade, 635 new cases of influenza were reported. Within days, the city will be forced to admit that epidemic conditions exist. Churches, schools, and theaters are ordered closed, along with all other places of "public amusement."

28 Sep. First case reported in Huntsville, AL on the same day that Royal Copeland, the Health Commissioner of New York City, announces, "The city is in no danger of an epidemic. No need for our people to worry."

October

1 Oct. Newspapers across the country report more than 20,000 cases of influenza at Army camps, total number of inflicted over 72,000. Twenty percent of Kansas City's army training schools had contracted influenza. Forty-three civilian cases had appeared, with 33 of them under isolation. Kansas City Health Director Dr. E. H. Bullock now acknowledged that his city was on the cusp of an epidemic, but noted that it was not yet dangerous.



2 Oct. Boston registers 202 deaths from influenza on October 2. Shortly thereafter, the city canceled its Liberty Bond parades and sporting events. Churches were closed and the stock market was put on half-days.

2 Oct. Two cases of influenza diagnosed in "railroad men" in Adams County, NE. Thirty-four Adams County service men lost their lives during the war, 21 of them to influenza.

4 Oct. U.S. Public Health Service advises state and local officials to enforce closure of all public gathering places because it does not have the authority to do so. 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. At Camp Funston, 1,270 soldiers fell ill in one day.

5 Oct. First flu-related death reported in Springfield, MO; 7 days later the newspaper was filled with obituaries. Topeka reported 25 deaths, ten of which were in two families.

6 Oct. Philadelphia posts what would be just the first of several gruesome records for the month: 289 influenza-related deaths in a single day.

7 Oct. 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."

New Mexico, which had remained largely untouched by the influenza, reported its first case.

Indianapolis banned all public meetings.

11 Oct. Wichita reports its first death of influenza. Within 7 days there were 147 patients at the Red Cross Hospital.

15 Oct. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* declares, "69 Have Died Here From Influenza" on the following day 600 new cases were reported.

17 Oct. The *Kansas City Star* proclaimed, "A DRASTIC BAN IS ON" announcing closures in Kansas City. Congress approved a special \$1 million fund to enable the U.S. Public Health Service to recruit physicians and nurses to deal with the growing epidemic. US Surgeon General Rupert Blue set out to hire over 1000 doctors and 700 nurses with the new funds. The war effort, however, made Blue's task difficult. With many medical professionals already engaged in lending care to fighting soldiers, Blue was forced to look for some recruits in places like old-age homes and rehabilitation centers.

The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* headline: "Nurses Needed as 558 New Influenza Cases and 9 Deaths Occur."

851 New Yorkers die of influenza in a single day. In Philadelphia, the city's death rate for one single week is 700 times higher than normal. The crime rate in Chicago drops by 43 percent. Authorities attributed the drop to the toll that influenza was taking on the city's potential lawbreakers.

18 Oct. 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 Oct 4 from the USS Boggs. Bert grew up in Syracuse, Missouri and volunteered for the USN when the US entered the war.

19 Oct. During the week of October 19th, there were 3,772 cases at Camp Taylor near Covington, KY.

23 Oct. 11 die in Ash Grove, MO.

28 Oct. In San Francisco, a public health officer shot a man for refusing to wear a mask.

➔ **October 1918** turns out to be the deadliest month in the nation's history as 195,000 Americans fall victim to influenza, 11,000 of them in Philadelphia alone.



Novzmbzr

7 Nov. The *Van Buren Current Local* stated, "The Spanish influenza has been raging for the past two weeks in Ellsinore and vicinity. There have been over 100 cases and several deaths reported." 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 (i.e. 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."

11 Nov. Armistice is announced and World War I comes to an end. Though much of the joy is weighed down by the epidemic, people around the world venture out into the streets for the first time in order to celebrate. Many go out without their masks for the first time, leading to a surge in influenza cases in many cities for weeks after the Armistice. Celebrating the end of World War I, 30,000 San Franciscans take to the streets to celebrate. There was much dancing and singing. Everybody wore a face mask.

18 Nov. By this date, 5,000 have died in New Mexico.

21 Nov. Sirens wail signaling to San Franciscans that it is safe--and legal--to remove their protective face masks. At that point, 2,122 were dead due to influenza. Within a few days, 5,000 new cases of influenza are reported in San Francisco.

Dzeczmbzr

3 Dzecz. Wichita struggled to keep streetcars running as 28 motormen & conductors did not report to work.

4 Dzecz. 205 new cases in Kansas.

5 Dzecz. A Home Service Bureau was established to care for influenza patients in Columbia, MO.

6 Dzecz. University of Missouri closes due to flu; with 2,500 student body, 200 sickened and 1 faculty death. St. Louis newspapers show pleas from Red Cross for women of the city who know anything about nursing to come forward to help.

12 Dzecz. Surgeon General warns epidemic not over.

14 Dzecz. By this date 1,020 cases of influenza cared for by all Missouri University hospitals.

1919

A third wave of influenza occurs in the winter and spring of 1919, killing many more. Third wave subsides in the summer. In San Francisco, 1,800 flu cases and 101 deaths are reported in first five days of January. Many San Antonio citizens begin complaining that new flu cases aren't being reported, and that this is fueling another influenza surge. 706 cases of influenza and 67 deaths are reported in New York City, triggering fear of a recurrence of severe flu activity. Illinois passes a bill to create a one-year course to become a "practical nurse," an effort to address the nursing shortage the pandemic had exposed. At Versailles Peace Conference, while negotiating the end of World War I with other world leaders, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson collapses. Some historians speculate he was weak from influenza, which was still rampant in Paris.

17 Jan. University of Missouri requires all to wear masks. 1,020 sickened since Oct., 14 dead.

30 Jan. After outbreak of flu at Camp McClellan, AL, Surgeon General declares quarantine.

23 Fzcb. Wichita reports 403 deaths from influenza and pneumonia in 1918.

13 Mar. Wichita's Red Cross Hospital is being closed for lack of funds even though 34 patients remain.



➔ **1 Apr.** **Mary Virginia DeHaven Siegel** died of influenza in Morgan County, MO. Her last words were part of a bible verse, “self-sacrifice is a great winning.” She was 29 years old. Her countenance is the middle photo in RomaMaryGrace.

2 Apr. St. Louis City Hospital released report stating it had treated 17,685 cases of influenza with 3,192 deaths between April 1, 1918 and March 31, 1919.

➔ Kansas City had experienced a long and hard influenza epidemic. From its start in late-September 1918 through early-spring 1919, over 11,000 cases and over 2,300 deaths occurred as a result of the epidemic. 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.

1920

24 Jan. Influenza fills hospital in Columbia, MO.

27 Jan. The American Red Cross had 165,000 trained nurses ready to mobilize to fight the flu as reports of influenza outbreaks occurred throughout the country.

30 Jan. Sororities at Mizzou turn their houses into hospitals for influenza patients. On the same day Wichita re-opened its influenza hospital as 36 new cases appeared.

31 Jan. Chicago reports 1,015 new cases of influenza.

1927. It is estimated that 21.5 million people died during the 1918 epidemic.

1951. PhD Candidate Johan Hultin attempts to find the influenza virus in frozen bodies in Alaska. He discovers no live virus.

1991. Revising the 1927 estimate that 21.5 million people died, researchers recalculate the numbers at 30 million.

1996. Scientists at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology begins to reexamine the 70 lung specimens related to the 1918 influenza pandemic, searching for the samples most likely to contain the virus.

1997. One year later, using lung tissue taken 79 years earlier during the autopsy of a U.S. Army private who died of the 1918 flu, the scientists conclude that it is a unique virus but is related to the “swine flu” after two years of team research.

1982. Flu linked to heart disease, dementia and Alzheimer’s.

2002. The *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* reports that the estimate of the numbers dead from the 1918 epidemic has again been revised. The newest estimate is that between 50 million and 100 million died.

2004. Researchers working separately at the Scripps Institute in La Jolla, California and at Britain’s Medical Research Council discover that the 1918 virus may have jumped directly from birds to humans rather than going from birds to pigs and then infecting humans.

2005. Using a technique called reverse genetics scientists at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology recreate the 1918 virus. They recovered the genome information from a flu victim who had been buried in Alaskan permafrost since 1918. The gene sequencing took the team ten years to accomplish.

Timeline is based upon information from the www.influenzaarchive.org, Center for Disease Control, newspaper accounts, the Medical Department of the United States Army in The World War, and Hoffman, Brian L. “Influenza Activity in Saint Joseph, Missouri 1910-1923: Evidence for an Early Wave of the 1918 Pandemic.” *PLoS Currents* 2 (2011): RRN1287. *PMC*. Web. 15 July 2018.