

INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

By Edwin Eugene Ott, March 24, 2020, addended January 17, 2021

The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. Before entering the war, the U.S. had remained neutral, though it had been an important supplier to the United Kingdom, France, and the other Allied powers. The U.S. made its major contributions in terms of supplies, raw material, and money, starting in 1917.

The Selective Service Act of 1917 authorized the conscription of citizens into military service for the war. American soldiers began arriving on the Western Front in the summer of 1918. During the war, the U.S. mobilized over 4 million military personnel and suffered 110,000 deaths, including around 45,000 who died due to the 1918 Spanish influenza outbreak (30,000 before they even reached France). A ceasefire and Armistice was declared on November 11, 1918.^{1,2}

Nearly 3,000 New Cases Spanish Flu At Camps Reported

WASHINGTON, Sept. 24.—Nearly 3,000 new cases of Spanish influenza in army camps had been reported to the office of the surgeon general of the army up to noon today, increasing the total number of cases to nearly 23,000. Deaths reported numbered 112, due chiefly to pneumonia which followed influenza. The total of pneumonia cases was 390 for all camps.

New cases of influenza was reported today from 21 camps in all, while Camp Bureaugard, La., reported its first cases. Camp Devens, Mass., had the highest number of new cases—616; and Camp Lee, Va., the second highest, 528.

The total number of cases at Camp Devens is now placed at 10,789 and it was announced that Col. Wm. H. Welch, a bacteriologist and organizer of the Rockefeller Institute; Dr. Rufus Cole, an expert on respiratory diseases from the institute and Col. Victor Vaughn, of the division of sanitation, have been sent to Camp Devens to study conditions there in an effort to combat the disease.

The Greenville News (Greenville, South Carolina)
25 Sep 1918, Wed · Page 1

Spread of Spanish "Flu" in Laurens County Continues

LAURENS, Oct. 3.—(Special).—The Spanish influenza epidemic steadily becomes more serious in this section. Three deaths have occurred at the Laurens Mill village and there is scarcely a family that has escaped so far. Many serious cases are reported today. The mill closed during the morning and will not start up again until the situation is improved or altogether relieved. There was a double funeral this afternoon at Cedar Shoals church, near Enoree, when Russell Prince, aged 19, and his nephew Robert Gregory, aged 3 years, were laid to rest in the same plot. Both died last night from pneumonia, following attacks of influenza. Young Prince was a son of Robert Prince, and the deceased was a son of Landrum Gregory, all residents of the Laurens Mill community. Earlier in the week, Joe Powers, son of H. R. Powers, succumbed to the disease, and was buried at Rocky Springs Presbyterian church.

So far comparatively few cases have been reported in the city and at Watt's mills, a nearby village. However, it was stated today that the epidemic was gradually spreading to the rural districts, a number of cases being reported from different sections.

All children in the city are prohibited from visiting or roaming over the community, this order being promulgated by the city council last night.

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4 Oct 1918, Fri · Page 1

¹ Wikipedia, United States in World War I, Accessed 20200324, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_in_World_War_I

² News articles were found using Newspapers.com.

Schools Closed.

On account of the epidemic of Spanish "Flu" the schools have been suspended for a week or ten days. Nearly all of the teachers have returned to their respective homes. All public entertainments or gatherings are prohibited.

Schools began closing.

The Greenville News (Greenville, South Carolina)
13 Oct 1918, Sun · Page 22

Public service announcements were made to help prevent spread of the disease.

**Help stop spread
of Spanish "Flu"**

The engineer who forgets orders does not mean to kill a lot of people, nor does the sentry who sleeps on duty mean to betray his comrades to the enemy—but the results are the same in both instances.

The man who thoughtlessly spits in public buildings, on the streets among congregated people, or on street car floors does not mean to spread disease. But he may do it just the same as though he did it deliberately.

Let's quit this promiscuous spitting in public places and hasten the end of the scourge.

**Southern
Public
Utilities
Company**

The Greenville News (Greenville, South Carolina)
22 Oct 1918, Tue · Page 5

Black humor poems were written to break the stress.

The Greenville News (Greenville, South Carolina) · 24 Nov 1918, Sun · Page 14

ODE TO "THE FLU"

Here's to the flue that disease
That makes you wobbly in the knees,
On! flue, flu, Spanish flu,
There's no telling what you'll do,
You make us ache in every joint,
And then the whole fix says anoint,
Pneumonia cure just lathered in
Mentholatum and tallow 'till its just

a sin,
Kerosine and turpentine,
And any grease of any kind
Mix it all and bind and plaster
You may kick but they'll smear all
the faster.

And next you're blistered all around
"Then by hec" you can't lie down,
Because the blisters break and run.
And take my word it's far from fun!
You cough and cough and spit and
spit,

Until you think you'll have a fit.
Medicine bottles all in a row,
Enough to start a new drug store,
And all the medicine they can pour
down

Didn't do any good they've surely
found

For you'll find the flue must take
its course,

But Doc insists on giving his dose
Ten pills of calomel given you,
And then hot salts—a dozen or two
Castor oil and turpentine

(Try it once—you'll think its fine.)
He gives you asperin and turpentine
Until you'll swear he's lost his mind
And as you grow more nauseated
Your other aches are under-rated.

Your head it seems will surely burst
But your eyes and ears and teeth
hurt worse.

And your chest and shoulders should
come first.

With the flue no doubt you're cured
So take my advice both friend and
foe,

And near the Spanish flu don't go
—Composed by Miss Louise Barr.
Sent to the paper by Carl F. Majors,
Mobile Veterinary Sec. No. 20, Camp
Sevier, S. C.

Apparently, the epidemic subsided somewhat. However, it came back to Laurens County with a vengeance, as described in this very sad article

Spanish Influenza Is Again Raging In Laurens County

LAURENS, Jan. 13.—(Special.) — Spanish influenza is raging throughout the city and county for the third time this season. In the city the health authorities report about 200 cases and from practically every section of the county the disease is making headway. While it seems to be of a milder type than heretofore, there are instances where entire families are prostrate and help is inadequate to cope with the disease. Talk of putting on a quarantine is heard in the city.

Information was received here yesterday of the death at Greenwood of Ben Willard, his wife and two children, the whole family. The bodies were brought to Mount Olive for burial yesterday, all being interred in the same grave. It seems that Mr. Willard recently went to Greenwood to visit a relative who had been stricken with the flu. He became ill and his wife and little daughters went over to nurse him. They too fell ill of the malady and all were sent to the hospital, where they passed away, the mother and two children the same day and the husband on the following day.

The Greenville News (Greenville, South Carolina)
14 Jan 1919, Tue · Page 2

More poems were written, and the influenza waned and waxed into 1920.

WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE FLU.
When your back is broken and your eyes are
blurred.
And your shin bones knock and your tongue is
furred.
And your tonsils squeak and your hair gets dry,
You're doggoned sure you're going to die,
But you're skeered you won't and 'fraid you will,
Just drag you to bed and have your chill.
And pray the Lord to see you through,
For you've got the flu, boy,
You've got the flu.'

When your toes curl up and your belt goes flat.
And you're twice as mean as a Thomas cat,
And life is a long and dismal curse,
And your food all tastes like a hardboiled hearse—
When your lattice aches and your head's a-buzz
And nothing is as it ever was,
Here are my sad regrets to you—
You've got the flu, boy,
You've got the flu.'

What is it like, this Spanish flu?
Ask me, brothers, for I've been thru;
It is Misery, out of Despair.
It pulls your teeth and curls your hair.
It thins your blood and brays your bones
And fills your craw with moans and groans,
And some time, maybe, you get well.
Some call it flu—I call it "Hell."
—Pickens Sentinel.

The Greenville News (Greenville, South Carolina) ·

31 Jan 1919, Fri · Page 4

Addendum: This influenza pandemic (aka, Spanish Flu) is estimated to have claimed the lives of 675,000 lives in the United States over a period of approximately two years.³ There was no vaccine available at that time. The COVID19 Pandemic reached the United States in early 2020. After almost a year, COVID19 has already claimed approximately 400,000 lives in the United States. Vaccines are now available to combat this latest pandemic. We all hope that the death toll will not surpass the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

³<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/reconstruction-1918-virus.html>