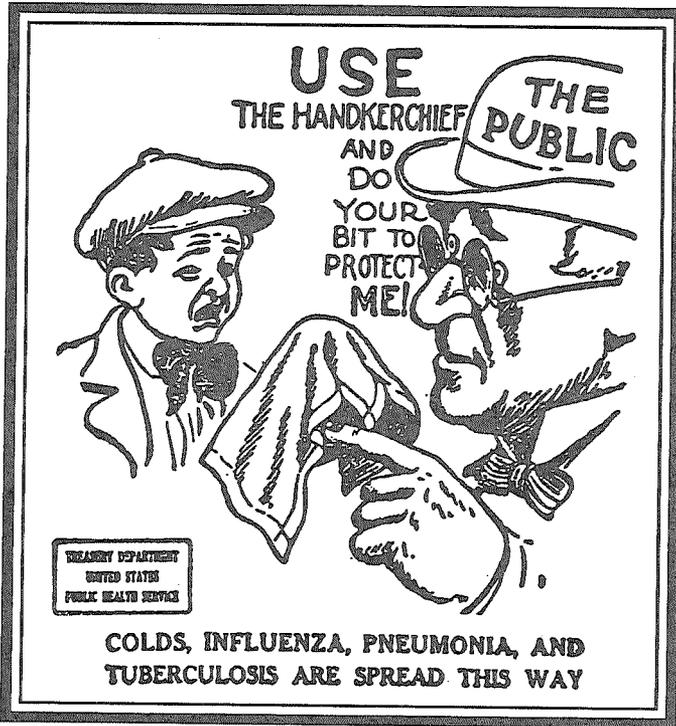


# COWLITZ HISTORICAL QUARTERLY



## *The 1918 Spanish Flu: A Pandemic Strikes Cowlitz County*



*Exhibits Draw Donations*

1996

Volume XXXVIII

Number 1

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# COWLITZ HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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David Freece, Consulting Editor

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*Cover illustration:*

*This poster, drawn by Barryman, a well-known Washington cartoonist, exemplified the "modern" method of health education in 1918. A few years prior, dry-but-accurate official bulletins were the sole public education teaching tools.*

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## CONTENTS

### **The 1918 Spanish Influenza: A Pandemic Strikes Cowlitz County**

*by Kathleen Edtl Hampton, MS, RM* . . . . . Page 5

Fanned by World War I activities and a denser population, this particular strain of influenza killed three to four times the usual number of people. The citizens of Cowlitz County could not avoid the "dread disease."

### **From the Collections: Museum Exhibits Draw Donations**

*By David Freece* . . . . . Page 31

Special exhibits often generate donations from people who, "didn't realize the museum was interested in these kinds of things." Our current special exhibit, "Art on the Water: Decoys Along The Pacific Flyway," inspired a Longview resident to donate two decoys. Donations such as these enable the museum to preserve and interpret a part of our regional history.

# The 1918 Spanish Influenza: A Pandemic Strikes Cowlitz County

*By Kathleen Edtl Hampton, M.S., R.M.*

*...A mother of seven small children succumbed Sunday afternoon to an attack of pneumonia following influenza. The unfortunate woman suffered with influenza about a week, and her husband and several children also are stricken with the dreaded disease.*

—*The Kelsonian*, October 30, 1918

*Paul suffered an attack of influenza about ten days ago and pneumonia developed shortly after. For several days his life was despaired of. The little fellow was four years of age last March... The funeral was held yesterday afternoon...in the presence of many sorrowing relatives and friends.*

—*The Kelsonian*, October 26, 1918

*In the death of "Jim" Catlin, as he was intimately known by his friends, who are legion, Kelso and Cowlitz county has lost one of its leading citizens, and the bereaved relatives have the deepest sympathy of sorrowing friends in this county and throughout the Northwest.*

—*The Kelsonian*, December 14, 1918

As with all epidemics, it was only a matter of time before the Spanish influenza carved its way through Cowlitz county. In the late spring and early summer of 1918, this particular epidemic may have made its first appearance in Spain. The infection was also prevalent in other parts of the world, but the designation "Spanish" influenza remained.

The virus arrived in the United States in August 1918, first striking Boston, the main shipping port for troops and supplies to the European war (World War I) theater. Once it had a grip on Boston, the virus took only six weeks to infect nearly every part of the United States and Canada. From Boston, the epidemic carved a path west and south, tracing troop movements via rail and water. By late September it reached the Pacific Coast, in Camp Lewis (now called Fort Lewis), Washington.<sup>1</sup> The first known case in Cowlitz County was reported in early October 1918, and the last in February 1919.<sup>2</sup>

In less than a year, the "dread disease" claimed about 20 million lives worldwide,<sup>3</sup> half a million in the United States,<sup>4</sup> about 7,000 in Washington state,<sup>5</sup> and about 40 in Cowlitz County.<sup>6</sup> This was a phenomenal season for this particular strain of influenza: it took more than one-half of one percent of the U.S. population that year, whereas other strains in other years normally kill between a quarter to a third fewer people.

## An Experienced Traveler

The "flu" has been regularly circling the globe every year for centuries. When an unusually large number of people in a community are afflicted, it is called an outbreak. When many communities in a region are stricken, it is called an epidemic. And when it is epidemic in many countries around the world, it is called a pandemic.

In this century, there have been at least five pandemics and numerous epidemics.<sup>7</sup> Recent examples include the 1957 Asian flu, the 1968 Hong Kong flu, and the 1977 Russian flu pandemics. None of these pandemics, however, took as big a bite out of the population as the Spanish flu of 1918.

**Figure 1:** The Surgeon General's information, ► published October 12, 1918 in *The Kelsonian*.

## INFORMATION ON SPANISH INFLUENZA

U. S. Surgeon General Blue Informs  
People Concerning the Present  
Epidemic

What is Spanish Influenza? Is it something new? Does it come from Spain?

The disease now occurring in this country and called "Spanish Influenza" resembles a very contagious kind of "cold" accompanied by fever, pains in the head, eyes, ears, back or other parts of the body, and a feeling of severe sickness. In most of the cases the symptoms disappear after three or four days, the patient then rapidly recovering; some of the patients, however, develop pneumonia, or inflammation of the ear, or meningitis, and many of these complicated cases die.

Epidemics of influenza have visited this country since 1647. It is interesting to know that this first epidemic was brought here from Valencia, Spain. Since that time there have been numerous epidemics of the disease. In 1889 and 1890 an epidemic of influenza, starting somewhere in the Orient, spread first to Russia, and thence over practically the entire civilized world. Three years later there was another flare-up of the disease. Both times the epidemic spread widely over the United States.

In contrast to the outbreaks of ordinary coughs and colds, which usually occur in the cold months, epidemics of influenza may occur at any season of the year, thus the present epidemic raged most intensely in Europe in May, June and July.

It is now believed that influenza

is always spread from person to person, the germs being carried with the air along with the very small droplets of mucus, expelled by coughing or sneezing, forceful talking, and the like by one who already has the germs of the disease. They may also be carried about in the air in the form of dust coming from dried mucus, from coughing and sneezing, or from careless people who spit on the floor and on the sidewalk. As in most other catching disease, a person who has only a mild attack of the disease himself may give a very severe attack to others.

It is very important that every person who becomes sick with influenza should go home at once and go to bed. This will help keep away dangerous complications and will, at the same time, keep the patient from scattering the disease far and wide. It is highly desirable that no one be allowed to sleep in the same room with the patient. In fact, no one but the nurse should be allowed in the room.

In guarding against disease of all kinds, it is important that the body be kept strong and able to fight off disease germs. This can be done by having a proportion of work, play and rest, by keeping the body well clothed, and by eating sufficient, wholesome, and properly selected food. In connection with diet, it is well to remember that milk is one of the best all around foods obtainable for adults as well as children. So far as a disease like influenza is concerned health authorities everywhere recognize the very close relation between its spread and overcrowded homes. The value of fresh air through open windows can not be overemphasized. Avoid crowded places. "Cover up each cough and sneeze. If you don't you'll spread disease."

*Influenza* literally means "influenced." Through the centuries, ancient philosophers observed the epidemics waxing and waning, and believed these were "influenced" by the stars. Scientists now know that these epidemics are not influenced by the stars, but by factors called genetic drift, genetic shifts, and an interplay among people, pigs, and birds.

However, our knowledge of how influenza is spread has changed very little since 1918. In the early part of this century, it was known that influenza "germs" were spread person-to-person, that germs were carried in the air with small mucus droplets expelled with the cough, sneeze, forceful talking, singing, etc. Health authorities recognized the greater spread among crowded populations and promoted this jingle: *Cover up each cough and sneeze. If you don't, you'll spread disease* (see Figure 1). This information is still correct.

The word influenza is no longer the dark shadow it was to our forefathers. Through 1920, influenza, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases were the number one cause of death in the United States. Influenza and its complications are typically responsible for about half of these annual deaths (see chart on next page).

By 1921, the steadily rising death toll from major cardiovascular diseases surpassed the declining death rate from infectious agents. Now, cardiovascular disease is our primary killer while cancer is second. Influenza (and its complications) is a distant fifth,<sup>8</sup> claiming about 20,000 American lives in an average year.<sup>9</sup>

We have become so relaxed about influenza that we often confuse colds and minor stomach "flu bugs" with the real thing. Colds and "flu bugs" last a few days to a week, give us slight discomfort, and rarely a fever. Influenza knocks us off our feet with a sudden high fever, extreme weakness, and severe aches and pains. Most people who contract the disease recover within

a week, although they may tire easily for awhile. However, for the elderly, newborn babies, and people with certain chronic illnesses, flu and its complications (usually pneumonia) can still be life-threatening.<sup>10</sup> If appropriate antibiotic or antiviral therapy is started quickly, the person's life can sometimes be saved.

<b>Top Causes of Death in the U.S.</b> (Number deaths per 100,000 population)	
1918	1990
#1–Influenza/pneumonia (588.5)	#1–Cardiovascular/kidney diseases (368.3)
#2–Cardiovascular/kidney diseases (397.0)	#2–Cancers (203.2)
#3–Infectious diseases, <sup>1</sup> not influenza (279.9)	#3–Accidents <sup>2</sup> (37.0)
#4–Accidents <sup>2</sup> (81.5)	#4–Infectious diseases, <sup>1</sup> not influenza (32.9)
#5–Cancers (80.8)	#5–Influenza/pneumonia (32.0)
#6–Other non-infectious diseases <sup>3</sup> (25.7)	#6–Other non-infectious diseases <sup>3</sup> (29.6)
#7–Suicide (12.3)	#7–Suicide (12.4)

Sources: *Historical Statistics of the U.S.: Colonial Times-1970*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Wash., D.C., 1975, and *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.: 1990*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Wash. DC, 1990.

- <sup>1</sup> Includes tuberculosis, syphilis, typhoid, scarlet fever and strep throat, hepatitis, diphtheria, whooping cough, and measles.
- <sup>2</sup> Motor vehicle, accidental falls, and all other accidents.
- <sup>3</sup> Diabetes mellitus and cirrhosis of the liver.

## The Virus Hits Cowlitz County

The influenza probably arrived in Cowlitz County in very early October 1918, because the Kelso schools abruptly closed on October 3, as "a precautionary measure to aid in checking the spread of Spanish influenza." During the closure, the school buildings underwent a thorough cleaning. "Floors, ceilings, walls and desks have all been washed thoroughly with disinfectant so that all germs are expelled and there will be no danger of any pupils contracting disease from this source."<sup>11</sup>

The first public report that the Spanish flu was here occurred October 12, 1918. **Influenza, in Mild Form, is Spreading** was the first headline in *The Kelsonian*, the county's official paper. Directly below that, **Twenty Cases in Kelso, Health Orders to be Enforced. Schools Closed all Next Week.** The front-page article reads:

*Kelso now stands closed for public gatherings, as a result of the threatened spread of Spanish influenza in this section. Public meetings, schools, theatres, churches are all closed at the suggestion of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States. These measures are taken to forestall a serious epidemic of the malady by prompt action in preventing persons from congregating in public places.*

*Dr. A.F.V. Davis has been appointed city health officer by the Council and all cases of influenza are to be reported to him immediately. People who have a cold and cough, or sneeze on the street will be required to return to their homes as every possible precaution must be taken to prevent the spread of the disease, which has only appeared in this vicinity in a mild form.*

*Dr. Davis announced this morning that there are twenty cases of influenza in this city. Since the enforcement of the order forbidding public gatherings no new cases have been reported. Some of the cases are light, while others have been on the verge of pneumonia, but most of the cases, having been reported immediately, the physicians have been able to check the influenza in the early stages. No new cases developed yesterday or today and the authorities hope that an epidemic for this community has been averted, although the danger is not yet passed.*

*Schools were closed Thursday to aid in checking the spread of influenza, but there is great danger of children running about the city, getting wet feet and exposing themselves to colds by reason of being freed*

*from school attendance. Parents should see that children stay at home. Children running about the neighborhood and congregating together will more than offset the advantage sought by closing the schools. The authorities advise that these means of prevention be heeded so that more stringent measures will not be necessary. The schools will remain closed all next week, and possibly longer.*

*The Red Cross rooms will be open next Tuesday and Thursday only for women who wish to bring in linen or finished work [for the war effort].*

*No services of any kind will be held in any of the local churches tomorrow. The community fair which was scheduled for today was called off and the Boys' and Girls' Club Fair and Teachers' Institute which were to have taken place in Kalama have also been postponed.*

*The pool rooms will continue to be open for the sale of confectionery and cigars but the tables have been covered and crowds are not allowed to assemble there.*

*All lodges and organizations will not hold any meetings.*

*All of these precautions which are to be taken by the public will soon check the spread of the epidemic.*

The voluntary closure of most public places lasted only eleven days. By October 23, all public gatherings of any kind were explicitly banned by Dr. Rupert Blue, US Public Health Service Surgeon General, and the Washington State Board of Health.

Effective October 28, Kelso health officer Dr. Davis followed the Surgeon General's recommendation and ordered gauze masks to be worn in all public places. Authorities were asked to strictly enforce this order. The Red Cross headquarters sent a sample gauze mask for display in the window of C.D. Easton's store on Allen Street. Apparently, private citizens had

to make and sterilize their own masks. Two days later, the paper reports that, "Gauze-masked, the people of Kelso are co-operating good-naturedly in attempting a mastery over the disease."

On October 29, an emergency hospital was opened at the Methodist Church. "This sort of hospital is being used in many of the cities where the disease is prevalent with great success as the cases are isolated and there is less danger of spreading the disease."<sup>12</sup> All influenza cases were to be cared for at the makeshift infirmary. Donations for furnishings—to be returned when the epidemic passed—were urgently solicited. The articles they asked to borrow were: beds, single cots, pillows, quilts, cotton and wool blankets, sheets, pillow cases, bed pans, hot water bottles, springs, single mattresses, and towels.

The extended school closure was causing classroom work to fall far behind schedule. No one knew when the schools would open again. In an effort to make some progress, Kelso School Superintendent Frank W. Peterson published a letter in *The Kelsonian* urging parents to encourage their children to do an hour or two of home study each day (see Figure 2). He opened the high school the following afternoon so that parents could pick up books for reading.

To help the influenza effort, the Red Cross Department of Nursing published an urgent plea for "every graduate nurse, every woman who has had any training, every practical nurse, and every woman who has taken training to be a Nurses' Aid." Graduate nurses would be paid \$75 per month plus expenses; undergraduates and Aids were to receive from \$30 to \$50 according to qualifications. The initial plea did not specify where the nurses would work.<sup>13</sup> The Red Cross received scant reply. Five days later they threatened to conscript women if there were no volunteers. Finally, one woman, Miss Janet Pendegast, volunteered. So the Red Cross announced they would canvass the city for nurses, who would be called to work

**To the Patrons of Kelso Schools**

The enforced closing of the local schools is bringing to the front many very serious questions that are perplexing to the teacher, parent and pupil. The time, or the date, that the schools may open has not been decided upon definitely. That depends upon how successfully those in charge are in checking the spread of influenza, be it Spanish, Teutonic, or otherwise. This, however, we do know, that schools will not re-open within a few days, that the time now lost can never be entirely made up. There are, however, some matters of importance to teachers, parents and pupils that should be carefully weighed and considered in case schools are not re-opened within another week or two.

In every school and in every class there are superior, or super-normal, average, and sub-normal pupils. Those in the first mentioned class generally do more and better work than the average pupil if held to it. In times like these when the school year is shortened, they still have an opportunity of getting through with fair grades. The average pupil has also a chance to get through his grade, provided he makes use of all his spare time and does not let work pile up. Now is the time to read on ahead and get such work done than can be done without a teacher to point out each step. Now is the time to put in a few hours a week so that one may be sure of ranking in the superior class when the grades go in for promotion. Then those who cannot

carry a full course and get through this year will be advised to drop a subject in order to get through in a few subjects with good standings.

The parents are urged to encourage their children to do some home study each day if possible and where such will be done in a creditable manner it will not be effort lost.

We also wish to urge them to encourage the boys and girls to read good books and magazines. In this way they are not only coming in touch with the world about them, the material facts, but with the great personalities of the past and present. They are also developing their mental processes, thus keeping in better shape for study when called again to their mental tasks. Then too, when school begins, provide, if you can, some quiet, war, well-lighted corner or room where that boy or girl of yours can study undisturbed for an hour or two every evening. In this way you can help us to secure for your boy or girl the necessary mass of information and training essential to future progress.

The teacher, too, will have a serious problem in selecting the essentials in her subjects, for the time will be too precious to spend upon unnecessary details and non-essentials.

I shall be glad to render any aid possible to those wishing to do any home study during this time. Anyone wishing to secure books for supplementary reading can do so if they come to the High School Building any time on Thursday forenoon.

.. FRANK W. PETERSON

**Figure 2:** Letter from the Kelso School Superintendent, Frank W. Peterson. Published in *The Kelsonian*, October 23, 1918, page 1.

in the army camps in the Northwest.<sup>14</sup> The paper does not report the results of this latest effort.

The Surgeon General's strict ban on public places was finally lifted on November 11. By this time, the epidemic appeared to be on the decline in Kelso, but other communities in the county still had many cases.

*...it is with joy that the news has been received that the influenza cases have so decreased and the lifting of the ban has been advisable. Almost all the cases are on the way to recovery in Kelso.*

*After the vacation of several weeks the school children will again wend their way to their schoolrooms Monday morning. Teachers are returning and in a few days the machinery of education will be at work as though the enforced vacation had never occurred.*<sup>15</sup>

This jubilation lasted but one day, November 18. Schools were closed the very next day due to the illness of several teachers. Finally, the high school reopened a week later and stayed open; the grade school reopened the following week. To make up for lost time, the Kelso school board voted to temporarily add a half-hour to each school day, shorten Christmas break, and hold half-day Saturday sessions. This schedule lasted until February 1919.

The daily activities of Cowlitz County residents had been disrupted over thirty days. They cooperated as a patriotic duty; would current area residents tolerate such a restriction?

## A Rocky Recovery

When the ban on public gatherings was lifted, the epidemic was definitely on the decline. However—as with most

epidemics—there was a resurgence of new cases when people started congregating again.

On January 15, 1919, the county Board of Health commissioners instituted a close quarantine of all cases showing influenza symptoms because, "in several sections of the county there is a recurrence of epidemic conditions, although locally influenza is on the wane..." All citizens of Cowlitz County were asked to note and obey the following new order:

*One—An emergency existing on account of the present epidemic of influenza; Be it ordered by the County Board of Health that all cases that show symptoms be quarantined until danger is past.*

*Two—All physicians must report all cases of influenza to the Health Officer, Dr. O.K. Wolf, within 24 hours.*

*Three—And that all teachers of the county at first signs of the epidemic shall send pupils home and must report same to the County Health Officer.*

*Four—And all persons showing signs of the epidemic be barred from attending picture shows, dances and all public gatherings.*

*Five—Ordered that those regulations be printed and posted in all schools, stores and other public places throughout the county.*

*These orders will be enforced and failure to obey, or effort to avoid quarantine will be vigorously prosecuted.<sup>16</sup>*

Sometime after this new order, a ban on athletic contests was issued. (Not all public notices appeared in the paper. It appears that the post office was the reliable location of such announcements.) The February 5 *Kelsonian* reported that the basketball game between the Kelso and Castle Rock high schools was called off, "on account of the County Health

Officer's ban on athletic contests. It was lifted by February 15, because the paper resumed announcing various games.

The flu left many of its victims weak and susceptible to other infections, long after the initial virus had departed from their bodies. Some of those who escaped the death grip of the flu were now in the clutches of tuberculosis. Spain and England were the first to report an increase in tuberculosis illness and death among the influenza survivors, as the flu hit those two countries first. Realizing this, the U.S. Public Health Service's "Advice to 'Flu' Convalescents" appeared in the December 7, 1918, *Kelsonian*. Part of the text appears below:

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★  
★  
★ Beware tuberculosis after In- ★  
★ fluenza. No need to worry if ★  
★ you take precautions in time. ★  
★ Don't diagnose your own con- ★  
★ dition. Have your doctor exam- ★  
★ ine your lungs several times at ★  
★ monthly intervals. Build up your ★  
★ strength with right living, good ★  
★ food and plenty of fresh air. ★  
★ Don't waste money on patent ★  
★ medicines advertised to cure tu- ★  
★ berculosis. ★  
★ Become a fresh-air crank and ★  
★ enjoy life. ★  
★  
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

*"Experience seems to indicate," says the Surgeon General, "that persons whose resistance has been weakened by an attack of influenza are peculiarly susceptible to tuberculosis. With millions of its people recently affected with influenza this country now offers conditions favoring the spread of tuberculosis."*

*The Surgeon General warned especially against certain danger signs... "If you do not get well promptly, if your cold seems to hang on or your health and strength decline, remember that these are often the early signs of tuberculosis. Place yourself at once under*

*the care of a competent physician. Tuberculosis is curable in the early stages.*

*"Above all do not trust in the misleading statements of unscrupulous patent medicine fakers. There is no specific medicine for the cure of tuberculosis. The money spent on such medicines is thrown away; It should be spent instead for good food and decent living."*

The Surgeon General's prediction was partially correct. The death toll from tuberculosis in the U.S. had been steadily declining since the turn of the century (194.4 deaths per 100,000 people in 1900 to 138.4 per 100,000 in 1916). The death rate rose in 1917 and 1918 (143.5 and 149.8, respectively), then continued its decline in 1919 to present times.<sup>17 18</sup> The slight mortality rise in 1917 was obviously due to some other factor or factors; the continued rise in 1918 was likely a combination of tuberculosis and the other pre-existing factor(s).

## Remedy Hope and Hype

In the absence of the vaccines, antivirals, and antibiotics of today, plenty of home remedies and patent medicines promised certain relief. According to one advertisement, citizens could avoid the flu by taking Rexall Cold Tablets and Liver Salts (Figure 4). People seemed to be willing to put anything into their bodies if a cure or prevention is promised.

Testimonial advertisements for Foley's Honey and Tar appeared in every issue of *The Kelsonian* during the influenza epidemic. "One bottle gave relief. Best medicine I ever used," said Henry Willis of Sandy Point, Texas (Figure 5). Another gentleman from San Antonio, Texas, took his first dose at night, and noticed relief before bed time (Figure 6). A sizeable

(continued on page 20)

## Cowlitz County Events

Week of Epidemic <sup>1</sup>	# Cases reported in paper (approx)	# Deaths reported in paper <sup>2</sup>	
1 (Oct 6-12)	20 new	0	10/3: Schools closed. 10/5: V
2 (Oct 13-19)	45 new	1	
3 (Oct 20-26)	35 new	3	
4 (Oct 27-Nov 2)	10 new	4	10/28: Wear masks in public.
5 (Nov 3-9)	4 new	3	11/9: Emergency hospital clos
6 (Nov 10-16)	none reported	0	11/11: Public gathering ban lif
7 (Nov 17-23)	11 new	0	11/18: Schools open. 11/19:
8 (Nov 24-30)	none reported	1	11/25: High school reopens.
9 (Dec 1-7)	none reported	0	12/2: Grade school reopens.
10 (Dec 8-14)	200 total	3	
11 (Dec 15-21)	none reported	1	
12 (Dec 22-28)	none reported	0	
13 (Dec 29-Jan 4)	none reported	1	
14 (Jan 5-11)	none reported	1	
15 (Jan 12-18)	none reported	1	1/16: Quarantine of ill person
16 (Jan 19-25)	none reported	3	
17 (Jan 26-Feb 1)	none reported	2	
18 (Feb 2-8)	none reported	0	2/5: Athletic contests banned
19 (Feb 9-15)	none reported	0	2/? : Athletic ban lifted.
20 (Feb 16-22)	none reported	0	
21 (Feb 23-Mar 1)	none reported	0	

<sup>1</sup> According to the daily files of *The Kelsonian*, Oct. 1, 1918–Mar. 1, 1919. There were probably a

<sup>2</sup> Deaths not specifically reported as due to influenza are not included here. Deaths of Cowlitz Co

# the 1918-19 Epidemic

## Public Official Directives

tary quarantine. 10/12: Ban on most public gatherings.

9: Open emergency hospital. 10/30: Free experimental serum. 11/2: Ban on all public gatherings.

ools close.

l.

40 influenza deaths, calculated from *Selected Vital Statistics of the State of Washington: 1910-1949*. Servicemen who died of illness in the service not included here.

(continued from page 17)

number of people in the Kelso area must have shelled out the \$1.20 a bottle; Foley's couldn't afford the heavy advertising if the product didn't sell.

The local paper carried an account of how an onion poultice cured a Milwaukee patient in one day. In desperation, the wife of the sufferer cooked up a batch of onions, thoroughly saturated it with turpentine, and applied part of the concoction to her husband's chest "in the old fashioned way." When she left the house for a few minutes, her husband ate the remaining onion-turpentine mixture. He survived the turpentine, got up the next day, and later fully recovered. (Figure 3.) There were no reports of Cowlitz County residents using this remedy.

Figure 3:  
The onion-turpentine cure  
that appeared in *The Kel-*  
*sonian*, January 22, 1919,  
page 4, column 4.

#### Onion Poultice Gave Relief

According to the Milwaukee magazine, J. J. Murphy, division superintendent of the Milwaukee system at Deer Lodge, Mont., will always maintain that an onion poultice, applied in the old fashioned way, routed the influenza germ from his system after it had defeated the efforts of modern medicine.

"According to Mr. Murphy, he was desperately ill, and physicians had given up all hopes of his recovery. As a last resort Mrs. Murphy decided on the poultice remedy, and cooked up a batch of onions, thoroughly saturated with turpentine, and applied a part of the concoction to her husband's chest.

"Mr. Murphy responded a little, and his wife was able to leave him for a few minutes. During her absence the patient in a half delirious impulse arose and devoured the remainder of the onions—turpentine and all. The next day he was up and is now fully recovered."

# Avoid the "Flu"

by using

**Rexall  
Cold Tablets**

and

**Rexall  
Liver Salts**

at the first sign of  
a cold

**RED CROSS  
PHARMACY**

THE REXALL STORE

**Figure 4:** This ad appeared in the December 28, 1918 issue of *The Kelsonian*. The Rexall store routinely ran advertisements for colds, coughs, and other common ailments, but very few of their ads referred to the "flu."

Don't let the dread influenza get you. If you have even the slightest cough or cold, better begin using Foley's Honey and Tar at once. Henry Willis, Sandy Point, Texas, is one of many thousands, who consider this remedy "just fine." He says "I suffered severely with a bad cough; after using four or five dollars' worth of different medicines decided to try Foley's Honey and Tar. One bottle gave relief. Best medicine I ever used." Contains no opiates. Sold everywhere. 15

Wm. Barnes, San Antonio, Tex., writes: "Foley's Honey and Tar is the best cough remedy in the world. It has been worth \$50.00 a bottle to me. I had the 'flu' followed by pneumonia, which left me weak, with a persistent cough. I needed rest and sleep, which I was unable to get. Some one advised Foley's Honey and Tar. I began taking it that very night. Before bed time I noticed relief, and that night had a sound sleep and perfect night's rest, the first since the beginning of the flu. I have completely recovered and do not cough at all. It cost me only \$1.20 to cure that obstinate cough with Foley's Honey and Tar. Let all who read this letter try Foley's." Sold everywhere. 15

**Figure 5:**

A Foley's Honey and Tar ad seen many times in *The Kelsonian*. This one ran December 13, 1918 on page 4.

**Figure 6:**

Another frequently seen Foley's ad. This one appeared in the February 1, 1919 issue of *The Kelsonian*.

NOTE: The "tar" in the cough remedy is coal tar. We now know this causes stomach cancer.

An experimental "anti-influenza serum" had just become available. The State Board of Health recommended it to prevent some influenza complications. By the end of October, 1918, it had been used in several hundred cases in the U.S., none of which resulted in fatal cases of pneumonia.

Some of the local doctors received a limited supply of the serum, and offered free injections to anyone who wanted it. It was not reported how many county residents received the injection, or if any of the local fatal cases had been treated earlier with the serum. Because the science of epidemiology was still in its infancy, records were not kept as meticulously as they are now.

## County Disruption and Destruction

The ban on public gatherings affected a great number of businesses, industries and public services. The ban plus the actual illnesses and deaths must have caused tremendous hardship and economic loss:

- The logging camps in the area--Inman-Poulsen, Eufaula co., Ostrander Railway & Timber Co., Silver Lake Co., Modrow Co., and others--were hit hard. Several men contracted influenza at these camps and died. Each of the camps reported numerous influenza closures and re-openings throughout the winter, reopening for good in March 1919. The January 29, 1919 *Kelsonian* reported that two of the eight children in a family that lived at the Inman-Poulsen camp died of influenza that week, and nearly all members of the family were seriously ill.
- The road to the I.O.O.F. cemetery was damaged by increased traffic and had to be repaired. The county normally experienced from 44 to 72 yearly deaths<sup>19</sup>; the epidemic nearly doubled this number.

- Since theaters were closed across the nation, the National Association of Motion Picture Industries temporarily suspended all motion picture releases after October 15.
- The Kelso Fair and the Cowlitz County Boys' and Girls' Club Fair was cancelled.
- Church services, lodge and all other organization meetings were cancelled.

People whose work required them to deal with large numbers of people, and those in crowded living conditions, seemed to be hit especially hard:

- The physicians who examined hundreds of Cowlitz County young men for the local draft board, Drs. R.L. Parrish and C.E. Stafrin, both contracted influenza early in the epidemic. Then they gave the bug to their families.
- The paper reported a total of twenty Cowlitz County servicemen who died in the war (World War I); at least eight of these were influenza—not battlefield—casualties.
- Sheriff Clark Studebaker caught the flu early in the local epidemic. He partially recovered, then suffered a nervous breakdown. "Sheriff Studebaker is the third member of the local Board to fall under the strain of its duties, which taxes them at times a great deal more than people realize."<sup>20</sup>
- Court sessions were postponed due to either the ban or the illness of the judge or clerks; the post office clerk also caught the flu.
- While the Kelso school children were affected first, several teachers caught the next wave. Just as the students recovered and the schools reopened, the teachers fell ill and schools closed again—one day later.

- Every staff member at the E.E. Brown & Co. mercantile establishment fell ill.
- Mrs. Sparling, of the Sparling Hat Shop, caught the flu then both her children contracted it. Other clerks in the hat shop also battled the bug.
- A very prominent member of the community, Hon. James R. Catlin, contracted influenza and died within a week of pneumonia. He was only 42 years old. Some excerpts:

*Born of one of the pioneer families of the Cowlitz valley at the old Catlin homestead at Freeport February 6, 1876, James Robert Catlin has made his lifelong home in this community and has been closely identified with public affairs not only in the Cowlitz county but throughout the Northwest. He was a son of Mr. and Mrs. Adam Catlin, pioneers of this section.*

*Mr. Catlin served two terms in the State Legislature as Representative from this county, and [secured] much legislation favorable to Cowlitz county at the 1913 and 1915 sessions. His interest, however, was not confined to local matters, and he had much to do with shaping laws of state-wide interest. He was an active leader in furtherance of moral legislation and was particularly interested in the "dry" campaign, being one of the active floor leaders of the dry cause. Many years ago Mr. Catlin saw the benefits to be derived from the reclamation by diking of the west side overflow lands, and it was largely due to his unflagging interest that the diking districts were organized. He was one of the original Board of Commissioners of Diking District No. 1, and that successful project was completed under his direction. As vice president of the Kelso State Bank since 1912, Mr. Catlin has been closely associated with Kelso business interests. In those connections and in many others he has been intimately identified with pub-*

*lic affairs of this community, and at the same time gave attention to his farms and farming interests generally.*

—*The Kelsonian*, December 14, 1918

Within the span of sixteen weeks, the Spanish Influenza halted all business activity to a halt for a month, infected several hundred Cowlitz County citizens, and seized about 40 of those lives. Among the 32 deaths reported in the paper, ten were children, eight were in the military service, at least five (probably more) worked or lived in logging camps, and the remainder were young to middle-aged adults. Most of these citizens are buried at the I.O.O.F. cemetery.

The records are not specific for several reasons. First, influenza was not a reportable disease at that time. So there was no system in place to efficiently keep track of all illnesses and deaths. Second, coroners, doctors, and health officials were sometimes reluctant to record a death as caused by influenza or its complications, leaving vague or incomplete records. Deaths from tuberculosis following influenza fall into this category. Reports in *The Kelsonian* reflect the ambiguous details. Third, the State Department of Health archives have moved several times. At this writing, they are unable to locate the information that the Cowlitz Health Department dutifully reported 77 years ago.

## **Why Was the 1918 Epidemic So Devastating?**

Slightly new strains of influenza come and go every year. Several times in a century the world's population is hit especially hard. So what made the Spanish strain and the 1918-19 flu season even worse?

World War I had a lot to do with it. Great numbers of people congregated for the war effort. In addition to troop concentration and movement, there were war parades, rallies,

mass gatherings for bond drives and other patriotic purposes.<sup>21</sup>

The number and size of cities were also growing, so people were more concentrated. Society was developing more mass activities in these larger cities and towns: motion picture theaters, vaudeville shows, larger schools, colleges, and universities, bigger fairs, numerous pool and billiard halls, and more churches and stores, to name a few.

## Will It Happen Again?

Experts agree we're due for another global outbreak, like the one in 1918. Several factors are setting us up for this. Every year, the viruses mutate a little more, until decades later they are so different that our once-immune bodies no longer recognize them. Additionally, many of the people who were exposed to previous strains and developed immunity have passed away.

Currently existing vaccines need to be improved (some people who get the shot develop influenza, anyway). In a British Medical Journal editorial, author Robert G. Webster states that, "Current preventive strategies involving vaccines and antiviral drugs could be expected to blunt the pandemic in only a few regions of the world."<sup>22</sup>

We have two antiviral medications available, but they only work 70-90% of the time *if* the drug is given within 48 hours of the first influenza symptom. Virus resistance to antiviral drugs is expected to emerge rapidly after the first wave of infection in a major epidemic.

Another factor that will cause a larger-than-usual pandemic is the aging of the U.S. population: an older population means increased susceptibility and death. (Sometime around age 40,

the effectiveness of the immune system steadily declines.) During the 1918-19 epidemic, the average age of the population was much younger than it is now.

All of these factors set us up for another Big One, perhaps one as destructive as the Spanish flu. Are we better prepared than the health officials of 1918 to thwart the next influenza pandemic? Not much. This is why our public health agencies are so vigilant, and why researchers around the world have launched an intense attack against the continual threat of influenza.

Memorial day is approaching. If you visit the graves of friends and loved ones, you may notice that about twice the usual number of people died between November 1918 and February 1919. Seventy-seven years ago our community—along with the rest of the world—unexpectedly lost many young mothers, fathers, babies, children, and community leaders. Our care in getting flu shots every year, and in obtaining prompt medical attention if infected, may prevent the needless deaths of our present-day Catlins, mothers of seven small children, grandparents, and four-year-old "little fellows."

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Kathleen Edtl Hampton, editor of the *Quarterly*, is also a Registered Microbiologist, a columnist for *The Loop*, newsletter of the National Registry of Microbiologists, and is active in the American Society for Microbiology. Ms. Hampton almost died in the 1968 Hong Kong flu pandemic, graduated from R.A. Long High School, and now lives in Bainbridge Island, Wash.

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# From the Collections:

## Museum Exhibits Draw Donations

*By David Freece*

Special exhibits often inspire donations to the museum collections. In some cases, these are pieces that the museum has sought and borrowed for special exhibits, and the people who loaned them have ended up donating them to the museum when the special exhibit ended.

The exhibits also call to people's minds that they own objects related to the exhibit, or realize for the first time that the museum's concept of what is history is wider than they thought. "I didn't realize that the museum was interested in these kinds of things," more than one donor has noted.

Recent examples of exhibit-related donations include the gift of dolls during our special exhibit, **Dolls: Small Reflections of Our Greater Society**, and quilt gifts when **A Stitch in Time: Quilts from the Collections of the Cowlitz County Historical Museum** was presented. When **People At Play: Recreation and Sport in Cowlitz County** was presented, a variety of objects and photographs were donated, including a Lower Columbia College letterman's sweater, a fishing pole, camping equipment, and golf supplies.

Currently, the museum's special exhibit is, **Art on the Water: Decoys Along The Pacific Flyway**. This exhibit is composed primarily of loaned objects from a number of individuals, and is supplemented with some items from the museum's collection.

As a result of the exhibit, two decoys were donated by Longview resident, George Paxton. Mr. Paxton grew up in

Kelso, attending Kelso High School. He, like many others in the area, enjoyed duck hunting and has a number of memories related to this sport. One place he liked to hunt as a youth was at the mouth of the Cowlitz.

One of the decoys donated is a wood mallard drake manufactured by the Hudson Decoy Plant of Pascagoula, Mississippi. This decoy factory is representative of a number of small operations that came into existence after World War I when there was a revival in wildfowl hunting, and a consequent shortage of decoys. George Paxton's uncle, Russell Pratt from Kelso, hunted with this decoy circa 1925.

Mr. Pratt also hunted with live decoys until their use was outlawed in 1935. The live birds were fitted with leather collars and tied with a long string to a horseshoe which served as a weight. According to his nephew, Pratt would carry six of these birds (three to a sack) up to three miles to hunt. The mallard hens were "real callers."

The second donated decoy was purchased by Mr. Paxton circa 1947-48, and is a Fairfax Deluxe Feather Flite mallard hen. Made out of plastic, it is well named: a set of these decoys may not have the aesthetic appeal of ones made out of wood, but for a weary hunter, they are certainly easier to transport. He used it in hunting at a lake he leased near Ridgefield.

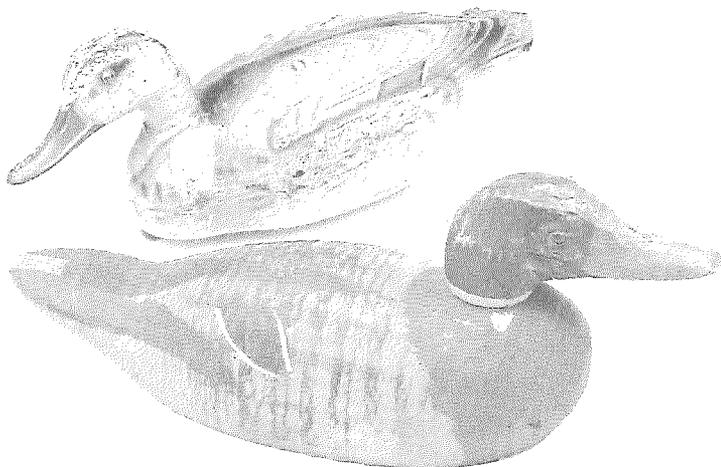
These two decoys help the museum preserve and interpret a part of our regional history, that of waterfowl hunting. We thank George Paxton for their donation.

## **Decoys for Dinner**

Just before the live decoys were outlawed, George Paxton found a nest of 13 or 14 mallard eggs in a slough which ran through the Kelso Golf course. Intending to raise them for live decoys,

he took the eggs home to his farm on South Pacific. He placed them under a Rhode Island Red hen, who hatched them: five drakes and five hens. George made a pond, eight to nine feet in diameter, and raised and trained the ducks. He whistled every time he fed them, and they would holler.

Unfortunately for George, the use of live decoys was outlawed before he could put them to work. Grandmother wouldn't let George keep them, so, as George recounts, "We had duck dinner." They killed them one at a time and ate duck *before* the hunting season that year.



The two decoys recently donated by George Paxton of Longview. **Top:** A plastic mallard hen, the Fairfax Deluxe Feather Flite decoy, manufactured circa 1947-48, and used by Mr. Paxton. *CCHM # 95.66.2*. **Bottom:** A wooden mallard drake, manufactured by the Hudson Decoy Plant Company, circa 1925, used by Mr. Paxton's uncle, Russell Pratt. *CCHM # 95.66.1*

### **Blind Rules**

**No unnecessary conversations until a half-hour after sunrise.**

**\$5 fine for any mistakes on hen mallards or pintails.**

**Do not feed the dog.**

**No imbibing until guns are cased.**

A sign that might be posted inside a duck blind. The museum's temporary exhibit (through November, 1996) includes a model of one of these hunting blinds.

*"If you miss, the only way to  
save your reputation is  
to hit two with one shot."*

## We'd Love to Hear From You

Do you have a story in you? Do you know someone who does? Maybe you have a dusty college paper on regional history or an aspect of life in our community?

If you'd like to see your work in print and be a published author, contact Kathleen Hampton for information and writer's guidelines. If you're not the writing type but still want to enrich our local history, leave the writing to us. We can get your story through an interview.

The editors also look forward to suggestions or comments on what you'd like to see in the *Quarterly*. To reach us, please contact:

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