



Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation

January Newsletter, 2020

This Year Marks the 102nd Anniversary of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic

Though the pandemic only lasted 15 months, 500 million people world-wide fell sick and it killed between 3-5% of the world's population. By October of 1918, schools were cancelled, and theaters, places of worship, and other public places had been shuttered. In October alone, 195,000 Americans died.



This devastating influenza outbreak was believed to have started in America's Heartland in 1918, when a doctor in Haskell County, Kansas reported an unusual flu activity to the U.S. Public Health Service. By March, it had spread to nearby Fort Riley. Very little was known about viruses and their transmission. A *News of the World* report from November 1918, lists the following recommendations: "Wash inside the nose with soap and water each night and morning, force yourself to sneeze night and morning, and then breathe deeply, take sharp walks regularly and walk home from work, and eat plenty of porridge".

From Fort Riley, soldiers carried the disease to other American military bases and, eventually, to the battlefield in Europe. By the end of 1918 an estimated 45,000 American soldiers would die from the flu, in comparison to the 53,404 reported to have died in combat.

The initial first round was rarely fatal and it was referred to as “three-day fever.” However, it did continue to spread and by summer it had been seen on nearly every continent. By July, the medical community had decided the threat was over. It was not.

In September, a soldier stationed at Camp Devens in Massachusetts was sent to the hospital and misdiagnosed with meningitis. The next day, more than a dozen more were sent to the hospital. At its worst point, 1,543 soldiers at Devens alone were diagnosed with the flu in a single day. Camp Devens was just 35 miles from Boston, which was one of the nation’s five most populated cities at the time, and from there it spread into cities.

This second round of flu was more severe. Death spread so quickly that many were buried in mass graves.

By September of 1918 the outbreak had reached San Francisco, when a Chicago man arrived carrying the virus. Once it arrived in San Francisco, illness spread quickly into the foothills, Sutter Creek and the surrounding communities. Within three weeks, 2,000 San Franciscans were infected. Of San Francisco’s population of 500,000, 45,000 became sick with the flu. Schools, movie theaters and other places of public entertainment were closed. Church services and court proceedings were held outside.

In Sutter Creek, The Ratto Theatre’s (now known as Sutter Creek Theatre) 1919 Grand Opening was delayed by almost a year due to the flu. The deadly epidemic closed all of Sutter Creek’s public buildings.

The flu strain responsible for the 1918 pandemic, also referred to as the Spanish Flu, was an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin. While it will likely never be known how it spilled over into humans, it is known that pigs can catch both avian and human flu viruses. When this happens, avian flu can develop the ability to infect humans. Not only did Kansas have more than a few pig farms, but southwestern Kansas (where Haskell County is located) sits along a major migratory path for more than a dozen bird species. Much has changed in the past 100 years, but basic pathways of disease emergence have not. Presently, 75% of infectious diseases are of animal origin.

Information gathered from: EcoHealth Alliance and SFGATE



The Following are Some Headlines and Excerpts from the Amador Dispatch during 1918 and 1919

May 3, 1918 (prior to the influenza outbreak): **HOG NEEDS PROTECTION** – The hog is rather scantily provided with hair and the warmer the country the less the hair. Therefore, he needs protection during the storms of winter. Unless you provide it, you invite colds, influenza, lung troubles, rheumatism.

September 27, 1918: **NEWS FROM LOCAL BOARD** – Orders received yesterday for the entrainment of 10 men to Camp Kearney, October 10, may be cancelled on account of the appearance of Spanish influenza recently at this Camp, and according to a dispatch from Washington in today's Chronicle, General Crowder last night cancelled calls for entrainment between October 7 and 11 because of epidemic of the disease in the camps.

October 11, 1918: **JACKSON MAN'S BODY SENT FROM REDDING** - ... the death certificate read "pneumonia, contributory cause, influenza. Accordingly, in order to take no chances of spreading what may have been the new epidemic Spanish influenza, thorough fumigation orders were given by City Marshall Kay, even to the car at Martell depot and the undertaker's dead wagon. As a further precaution the body was not allowed to be taken to the church...

October 18, 1918: **UNCLE SAM'S ADVICE ON FLU – U.S. Public Health Services Issues Official Health Bulletin On Influenza**

October 25, 1918: **ENGAGEMENT CANCELLED** – ...The Red Cross desires to carry out the orders of the State Board of Health in discontinuing for the present the holding of public gatherings of any description...

October 25, 1918: **GRAMMAR SCHOOL CLOSED** – The Trustees of the Jackson Grammar School have decided to close the school until after the present influenza epidemic is over.

October 25, 1918: **SHORT STORIES FOR OUR BUSY READERS** – The Jackson High School dance which was to be given in Love Hall tomorrow night has been called off by the City Board of Health in order to take no chances of spreading influenza.

November 1, 1918: **NEWS FROM LOCAL BOARD** – Local Board for Amador County announces to all registrants that on account of the influenza it has been necessary to temporarily suspend all physical examinations until further notice. The mailing of questionnaires to those of the 18-19 and 36-45 ages has also been deferred for the immediate present.

November 1, 1918: **THE BOARD OF HEALTH** – The Board of Health of the City of Jackson order that 10 rules go into effect immediately and that the Health Officer have masking stations at each entrance to the City.

November 22, 1918: **STEADIER HOG MARKETS PLANNED** – ... Another factor contributing to the break in prices during the month has been the influenza epidemic; it has sharply curtailed consumption of pork products and temporarily decreased the labor staff of the packers about 25 percent.

November 29, 1918: **MASK ORDINANCE NOW STRICTLY IN FORCE** – The Board of Health of the City of Jackson, The Board of Trustees of the City of Jackson, and a number interested citizens met November 27 to see what could be done to check the appalling influenza epidemic that is taking some time to run its course in this city.

January 10, 1919: **BIRTHS AND DEATHS FOR THE PAST YEAR** – Deaths from influenza-pneumonia: Between the ages of 3-18, two (2) deaths; ages 21-30, five (5) deaths; ages 30-35, six (6) deaths; ages 35-40, four (4) deaths, and ages 40-50, three (3) deaths – Total 20

January 10, 1919: **SUPERVISORS' PROCEEDINGS** – Emergency Ordinance No. 163 was adopted. ...any building, house, structure, tent or any part thereof, or any place, wherein or whereon exists or there is reason to believe exist Spanish influenza, pneumonia, or any other contagious or communicable disease shall be quarantined and every person subjected to quarantine...

January 17, 1919: **WEARING MASKS** – While there is nothing alarming in the influenza situation, the simple fact remains that the disease has not yet been conquered and until it is we should do all in our power to help the health authorities in stamping it out.

February 21, 1919: **INFLUENZA IS DUE FOR A THIRD VISIT** – Declaring that a study of influenza leads to the belief that a third wave smaller in volume than the second is imminent, the State Board of Health is sending out a warning to all county and city health officials to prepare for its reception.

September 05, 1919: **INFLUENZA** – Influenza is an Italian word meaning influence. One version of its origin is that in the far past there was a plague in Italy which was attributed to the influence of the stars and for this reason was called influenza.

In 1918 there were four incorporated cities in Amador County; Jackson in 1905, Sutter Creek in 1913, Amador City in 1915, and Plymouth in 1917. Lone wasn't incorporated until 1953. The 1920 census lists the population of Amador County as 7,793; Amador City at 377 - Jackson at 1,601 - Plymouth at 657 - and Sutter Creek at 920.

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