

1918 Pandemic Influenza in Maine

Saturday, September 7 1918

The first soldier at Camp Devens becomes ill with influenza.

Just 35 miles northwest of Boston this camp, like so many other military camps, was hurriedly erected the summer of 1917 just after President Wilson and Congress declared war against Germany and entered the United States into World War I.

Built to hold a maximum of 36,000 soldiers, Camp Devens is now crammed with over 45,000 soldiers, most of whom have recently been assigned there from Maine and other New England states after the draft was expanded from 21 to 35 year old men to include any healthy men ages 18 to 45 years old.

Nearly 5 million Americans now serve in the military, including 35,000 Mainers serving, including almost 300 women nurses.

Additionally, as part of the American Red Cross Nursing Corps, 24,000 women are also serving the country in World War I.

Despite this recruitment, the military suffers from nursing shortages, and recruitment efforts are intensifying.

Saturday, September 14

Influenza epidemic starts in Boston among the civilian population.

Wednesday, September 19

Boston and nearby towns are seeing curtailments of street car services and the closing of schools and theaters.

75 Boston policemen are home with the illness.

The supply of the drug used by the War Department is exhausted for the civilian population.

Saturday, September 21

10 nurses from Central Maine General Hospital in Lewiston left for Camp Devens on the 7:00 AM train.

6,000 cases of Spanish influenza are reported in the camp today, and the Boston Red Cross summoned nurses from all New England hospitals to care for the soldiers suffering from the disease.

An Auburn boy in the camp writes that the disease has spread through the entire cantonment.

Monday, September 23

Captain William E. Lawry, 36 year old secretary of the Maine State Senate, was stricken by Spanish influenza while visiting Camp Devens, and died upon his return home, leaving his wife and two young children.

20% of the over 45,000 soldiers at Camp Devens are ill with influenza.

Wednesday, September 25

Local Lewiston physicians are of the positive opinion that people in this vicinity should not be alarmed over an epidemic of Spanish influenza since there is no local epidemic of anything, just hard colds.

The Maine Department of Health has issued timely warnings about the disease's transmission – that the disease is given off in secretions and transmitted by coughing, sneezing, and sharing of utensils and towels.

Relatives of men sick at Camp Devens flocked from across New England to the camp in large numbers to visit.

Relatives of those most critical were allowed to remain overnight in the camps.

“America must put her home in order,” said Mrs. Halsey W. Wilson of New York City, secretary of the National Women's Suffrage Association, who spoke last evening before a large audience in the Columbia Hotel in Portland.

“The Government has called women into the munitions factories to work,” stated Mrs. Wilson, ... “What kind of America is this?

We are fighting for ideals abroad which we are refused at home.

Since the beginning of the war England has enfranchised her women, and several weeks ago the women of Canada were given the right of a voice in the government.

America is behind England from whose power we released ourselves in 1776.”

Thursday, September 26

The City of Portland's Mayor Clarke has called a conference in his office for Friday morning to see what action is necessary to suppress the further spread of influenza.

Managers of theaters, the superintendent of schools, Bishop Walsh, Bishop Brewster, and head of the Red Cross, Chamber of Commerce, Jewish societies, and church federation as well as members of the board of health, have been invited.

Portland's Chief of Police stated that the anti-spitting laws would be strictly enforced.

Elsewhere in New England, places of public assembly are closed.

Undertakers report they are hard pressed to fill demands for hearses and carriages for funerals.

Some cities are forbidding public funerals.

Telephone exchanges in Greater Boston lose 700 operators through influenza.

The telephone company requests that only essential calls be made.

Nearly 5,000 shipyard workers in Quincy are ill and all hospitals are full. A quarantine placed about shipyards in Portsmouth, NH.

Friday, September 27

The Fourth Liberty Loan parades, which were initiate this year's effort to raise money for the war effort, were postponed throughout the State because of public health concerns, and Liberty Loan officials urged Mainers to not forget to contribute to this cause.

Dr. Leverett D. Bristol, the health commissioner of Maine, said that he believed the epidemic of Spanish influenza in this state seems to be increasing, and he thought moving picture theaters ought to be closed temporarily as a preventative measure, but that the schools should remain open.

He noted that the state department of health has no authority to order the theaters closed, but the local boards of health could act in the matter.

One of the unusual instances connected with the illness and death at Camp Devens is the case of Private Philip Doyen, Jr. of South Portland, who was detailed to accompany the body of a Waterville boy to his home city. Private Doyen was himself stricken by the disease on the way to Portland.

The epidemic seems to be waging the fiercest in Portland, Bath, Lisbon Falls, and some scattered areas all over the state.

Dr. Thomas Tetreau, Portland's Health Officer, reported there were approximately 300 cases of influenza in that city.

Four nurses have died from influenza in Portland the past week, according to one local doctor, who also expressed the belief that all public places should be closed at once.

Following a conference of 30 citizens in Portland Mayor Clarke's office Friday, 22 voted informally to close all places of public assembly.

Dr. Bristol, state health director, was in favor of closing immediately places of general

resort, or else the adoption of a gauze mask which every person known to be afflicted with the disease should be compelled to wear in public.

Mayor Clarke quickly frowned on the latter suggestion, which was met with subdued laughter.

Lewiston Board of Health Chairman late Friday said, "To close the schools and theaters, or to in any other way suggest to the people that there is an epidemic here – for there most certainly is none." He voiced the sentiment of many prominent business and professional men.

The suggestion, advanced last night by State Health Commissioner Bristol of Augusta, that the theaters of Maine be closed, met this morning with very decided opposition here – not an opposition inspired by commercial reasons, but by a genuine desire for the city's good.

Saturday, September 28

Governor Milliken formed a military unit of 15 doctors and nurses to be known as the Maine Unit, which is to be sent to Massachusetts to assist in the epidemic of Spanish influenza. A general appeal was issued for additional Maine nurses to volunteer to Massachusetts.

Dr. Bristol, Maine's Health Commissioner, said that although the epidemic of Spanish influenza is showing a gradual increase, he did not think people should be particularly alarmed or panicky. The malady is raging worse in Portland.

Reports were received by the department that the epidemic had struck Biddeford, Saco, and Eastport.

Dr. Bristol sent letters to physicians urging them to be very careful to report cases of the Spanish influenza to the local boards of health, so as to keep track of the cases. The United Baptist convention was to start in Augusta next week, but has been postponed for two weeks.

The Portland Board of Health issued the following order:

"In order to conserve the public health it is ordered until further notice: That after September 28th, no assemblage or gathering shall be permitted or held in theaters, moving picture houses, or dance halls within the City of Portland, and no other unnecessary assemblage or gathering of people shall be permitted or held within said City. Public schools shall also be discontinued."

Portland Editorial: With the influenza epidemic reaching a stage where it has been found necessary to close the public schools and theatres and forbidding all unnecessary gathering, would it not be a wise measure for the Mayor to request the trolley company to use open instead of closed cars until such a time as the epidemic has abated?

Fresh air is advanced as one of the best preventatives. The comfort of a closed car should not be taken into consideration when the health of the community is at stake.

An active campaign of education in preventing the spread of grip or influenza was started in Lewiston Saturday following a meeting in Mayor Lemaire's office Friday afternoon.

Printed instructions will be posted in the factories, shops, stores, and other public places. Every possible means will be used to teach citizens how to fight this disease.

Mayor Lemaire said Saturday morning that the situation depends "more upon the person himself than upon the board of health or the doctors.

If every man, woman and child will follow the instructions we are having printed, there is no reason why the disease should spread.

If every person who has the grip will take every possible means to keep from giving it to other people, it will soon be checked."

Monday, September 30

Livermore Falls selectmen, board of health physicians, and the school board met to determine influenza preventive measures.

They announced the Androscoggin County Fair is to be postponed.

All public schools, churches, theaters, dance halls, pool rooms, and lodge room are closed until further notice.

Dr. Bristol, Maine's Health Commissioner, notes Spanish Influenza has risen slightly in Maine, but is hitting Portland and Bath the hardest.

Tuesday, October 1

On account of the epidemic of Spanish influenza and the fact that five students who arrived this morning were found to be afflicted with the disease, the opening of Colby College has been postponed for 10 days.

Students whose homes are less than 100 miles from Waterville will return to their homes during that period. The remainder will be taken care of on campus.

The Augusta Board of Health yesterday ordered all public schools, churches of every denomination, theatres, and the public library to be closed until further notice.

Children shall be excluded from public streets unless accompanied by parents or proper persons in charge.

The Portland Board of Health extended the public gathering orders to ban funerals.

Gauze masks are being distributed in the board of health offices to nurses and physicians to wear as a precaution.

“I don’t know when I’ve been more angry,” said Chairman Epstein of the Lewiston board of health this morning, “than when I read in a local paper that there are 400 or 500 cases of influenza in these cities. We only have an official tally of 27.”

As to the closing of the Lewiston theaters – this is a problem which does not affect Auburn, all of the theaters being in Lewiston.

On the other hand, there are those who point out that general conditions in Portland and Bangor, where the theaters have closed, are not parallel with those in Lewiston.

Portland and Bangor are essentially cities of homes, which are reasonably well heated.

Lewiston is to a considerable degree a city of tenements – of individual rooms, occupied by factory workers who have no homes of their own.

And nine out of ten of these rooms are not heated.

Thousands, literally, go to the theater at this time of year to keep warm.

With the theaters closed to them, what are they to do? It is a serious matter to them.

And of course, sitting in unheated rooms at this time of year would mean the spread of many colds.

Wednesday, October 2

By authority of officials of the two cities of Lewiston and Auburn, the schools, churches, theaters, pool rooms, dance halls, business college – everything but Bates College and the wage-earning industries – will be closed, beginning Friday morning, to prevent the spread of the influenza epidemic.

This was decided at 3:15 this afternoon at a meeting in Mayor Lemaire’s Office.

The difference of opinion regarding the theaters extended to the schools. Many advised that they be closed.

But, others – including the school authorities – thought it better that they stay open. Children are much safer in school than in unheated tenements or on the street.

Women Suffrage was beaten today in the U.S. Senate. By a vote of 53 to 31, the Senate failed to give the two-thirds majority necessary to adopt the resolution passed by the House submitting to the states the Susan B. Anthony suffrage amendment to the Federal constitution.

Maine senators split their vote, with Fernald favoring and Hale opposing.

Thursday, October 3

Rules To Avoid Influenza:

By the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army

- Avoid needless crowding – influenza is a crowd disease
- Smother your cough and sneezes – others do not want the germs which you would throw away.
- Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breathe through – get the habit.
- Remember the three Cs – a clean mouth, clean skin, and clean clothes.
- Your fate may be in your own hands – wash your hands before eating.
- Don't use a napkin, spoon, fork, glass, or cup which has been used by another person and not washed.

The Red Cross is mobilizing the nursing force of the City of Portland to help in caring for the many who have been stricken with the influenza.

They urge those who have maids or other employees who are willing to go into homes to take care of the sick and manage the household affairs, to release them for this patriotic service.

Friday, October 4th

On account of the number of cases of influenza among people of the Italian quarter of the city, the Italian church at 235 Fore Street has been opened and beds have been installed there for the use of persons who have been living in houses where the disease prevails.

This has been arranged as a matter of precaution against spread of the epidemic.

More beds are needed, also bed clothing, mattresses, etc.

It is a busy spot down at the Elks Building in Lewiston, as a number of women are making gauze masks for physicians and nurses in the present influenza epidemic.

The only way to stop the spread of the influenza is to close churches, schools, theaters, and public institutions in every community where the epidemic has developed, in the opinion of U. S. Surgeon General Blue of the Public Health Service.

“There is no way to put a nation-wide closing order into effect,” he said today, “as this is a matter which is up to the individual communities.

In some states, the State Board of Health has this power, but in many others it is a matter of municipal regulation.”

From H. P. Gardner, Executive Secretary of the State Public Safety Committee: “Please telephone at once to the chairman of the Public Safety Committee in each town in your county.

Ask the chairmen with all possible promptness to consult with the American Red Cross organization in the town, and if none, to act independently.

Canvass your town thoroughly for women who will volunteer as nurses in the present emergency.

It is not necessary that they be experienced or trained nurses.

You can include women who have had practical experience in the home.

Ask each if she can and will volunteer for nursing in this State or elsewhere at regular nurses’ wages with her traveling expenses paid...”

Saturday, October 5th

Late yesterday afternoon Maine Fuel Administrator Hamlen announced that in view of the present serious epidemic of influenza, he would authorize the use of automobiles to a limited extent tomorrow, Sunday, so that people might get out into the country and away from the crowded infected districts of the city.

Then, the Federal Fuel Administrator sent word that such a lifting of the Sunday driving ban should not be taken, as conserving fuel is still an important war effort.

Accordingly, Administrator Hamlen’s announcement was then rescinded.

Up until late yesterday afternoon 375 cases of influenza had been reported to the Portland Board of Health.

While this is the largest number so far reported in any one day, the physicians and health officials were not alarmed, for it was no more, in fact, less, than they had a right to expect from the weather conditions the day previous.

With clear, cool weather and plenty of sunshine, it is expected the number of new cases will take a downward trend.

The most drastic orders ever issued by the City of Portland were promulgated yesterday. The order was made effective at once and is as follows:

To further prevent the spread of influenza the closing order is hereby extended to include all indoor gatherings at churches and other places of public worship, all lodge meetings, society meetings, club meetings, such parts of building as used for pool rooms, billiard

rooms, bowling alleys, and to prohibit the serving of ice cream, soda or other soft drinks so called in other than individual paper containers that cannot be used a second time.

By Order of the Board of Health

Thomas Tetreau, MD, Health Officer

All the churches will be closed tomorrow, the masses at the Catholic churches will be held in the open air. This is the first time this has happened in Maine.

On Saturday morning the Lewiston Board of Health, followed by a conference with Mayor Lemaire in his office, decided it would make no effort to prohibit outdoor masses tomorrow by parishioners of the Catholic churches.

Secretary Epstein, although acquiescing in the decision, expressed his personal opinion that there should be no gatherings of any kind.

It was Secretary Epstein's idea that any public gathering, in the present crisis, would be unwise – a violation of the spirit of the order closing all churches and places of public resort, if not of its letter.

With this view the mayor did not agree, and there was a half hour of discussion. Nobody seemed to know the exact extent of the local board's authority, or just what it could do in the event of determining to forbid meetings of any kind.

Finally Mayor Lemaire suggested: "Why not call up the State board?" A minute later they had Dr. Young, the State Board's medical advisor, on the telephone.

Mayor Lemaire listened for about five minutes and then said: "He believes this local board has authority to prohibit any public meeting, if it is thought for the best."

The mayor waited a minute and added: "It seems up to you, gentlemen. The representative of the State Board says you have full authority."

The authorities in Lisbon Falls have made arrangements to convert the Columbia Hall into a temporary hospital. 400 cases of influenza have developed, a large number of those afflicted being employees of the Pejepscot Paper Company.

Bar Harbor Times Editorial

Is this new disease which has already killed hundreds and stricken thousands of our soldiers and civilians a new German war offensive? If not, how did it happen that this epidemic appeared so suddenly and extensively in such widely scattered cities and army camps throughout the country?

Smitten as from a bolt from a clear sky thousands of Americans have been suddenly prostrated in many widely separated parts of the country, during the past 10 days, by a disease which is called, apparently for want of a better name, "Spanish Influenza".

Monday, October 7

Dr. Leverett D. Bristol, State Commissioner of Health, said this afternoon that the epidemic of Spanish influenza, in his opinion, is gradually increasing in the State, but not to an alarming extent.

Evidence of the malady is brought more to the attention of the health department by the new ruling of the State Health Council approved by the Governor and Council, requiring doctors to report their cases to the local boards of health.

In other words, there might have been 100 cases of influenza in a community which had not been reported until after the rules adopted by the Public Health Council had become effective.

The Board of Health in Waterville has closed all places of amusement due to the epidemic of Spanish influenza.

It was understood that on Saturday evening many from this city went to Fairfield, where the moving picture establishment and the pool rooms did a thriving business.

No closing order has yet reached Fairfield, but it would seem apparent that Waterville people in doing such a thing would be endangering those they meet up there as well as themselves.

The cars have not been fumigated.

Tuesday, October 8

Justices of the Maine Supreme Court have fallen into line with other officials in the matter of combating further spread of influenza, by suspending or postponing the current terms of court.

Governor Milliken, in a call to the people of Maine, Tuesday requested that every precaution be taken to prevent further spread of the influenza epidemic and included in his request the suggestion that all places of amusement be closed.

“However,” he explained, “Schools and churches should not be treated as unnecessary public gatherings. They are on a different footing from non-essential amusements. They should be closed only when, in the judgment of the local health authorities, the danger in keeping them open over balances the need of their continuance.”

“It is urged that all unnecessary travel be avoided. There is no occasion for panic among our citizens. Maine has, so far, been fortunate and the disease has not gained great headway except in a few localities. The U.S. Public Health Service, the Maine Department of Health, the Red Cross, the Public Safety Committee, and the Medical Reserve of the National Guard are working together efficiently to aid stricken communities and to prevent further spread of the disease.”

Dr. Bristol noted that most of the influenza cases in this state are traceable to people who have gone to Massachusetts, particularly to Camp Devens, and brought the germ of the disease back with them.

The October meeting of the Rockland City Council is generally a prosaic affair, but last night's session was interesting enough to stamp it as an exception. A. S. Black, president of the Maine Theatres, Inc appeared before the municipal officers to enter a protest against the closing of theaters, churches, and schools, when the board of health is apparently neglecting other places in which the dreaded influenza can gain a foothold.

"There's no middle ground," said Mr. Black, "either the situation is serious enough for radical action, or it is not serious enough to warrant the steps which have been taken." Mr. Black listed a number of places which had not been asked to close: public funerals, soda fountains, restaurants. "We'll take our medicine with a smile, no matter how bitter the medicine is," said Mr. Black, "but we won't smile unless a fair deal is being given and all are being closed alike."

Thursday, October 10

Portland Editorial

In their efforts to control the present epidemic of influenza the Portland Board of Health has adopted certain rules and regulations: closing of schools, theatres, churches, bowling alleys, billiard rooms, dance halls, lodges, and unnecessary gatherings; as well as requiring sanitary disposable containers for the selling of ice cream and soft drinks.

However, there are a number of places where not the slightest attention appears to be paid to these regulations. Beer saloons have been ignored. They are over crowded, glasses are shared and hardly washed, and men freely spit on the floor. Portland has a sanitary inspector and a restaurant inspector, both of whom are supposed to enforce the law and know thoroughly existing conditions. Someone is responsible for permitting these conditions to exist. Who is it? What is the reason for these places being freely open?

For nearly three hours, late Wednesday afternoon, clergymen and physicians of Lewiston discussed the influenza epidemic and the vitally important question of whether or not the churches shall be required to close.

Lewiston Mayor Lemaire called the meeting to order about 3:15 and very briefly told the purpose of it – to get at some understanding as to whether schools and churches should be closed or not during the present epidemic. He called upon the doctors and clergy to state their views.

Two prominent figures in the meeting were Dr. Epstein, the Chair of the Lewiston Board of Health and Monsignor McDonough, pastor of St. Patrick's Church.

Dr. Epstein (Dr. E)

Although the Spanish Influenza has not taken too much of a hold here yet, I believe we have waited too long to close all public gatherings, including churches. We have learned from Boston that we need to act before the epidemic takes off.

Monsignor McDonough (MMc)

Dr. Epstein, do you consider the factories and mills as public gatherings?

Dr. E

Not in that sense. The factories and mills are necessary to sustain life.

MMc

Then you think there are times when the church is not essential?

Dr. E

Certainly, they are essential in a sense, but not in the sense that mills and factories are essential.

MMc

I am not asking for comparisons, I want to know if you think churches are an essential asset to a community?

Dr. E

I do not care to discuss that phase of the situation

MMc

Are mills and factories not dangerous?

Dr. E

Do I understand you would like to close the factories?

MMc

I believe there are no half-way measures – if you're going to close public gatherings, I would close everything.

Dr. E

This epidemic is serious – influenza is a contagion and causes infection.

MMc

They say that you can't close the mills. Why? Because they are essential. Some of us believe the churches essential – very essential indeed. We should not be denied the privilege of appealing to our Heavenly Father. Who has the authority to close the churches?

Dr. E.

The Lewiston Board of Health, as with all town boards of health in Maine, are the only entities that have the authority to ban public gatherings.

MMc

And, if I should open my church next Sunday, you might call in the police and close me up?"

Dr. E.

We have the right to go as far as we like in the interests of public health.

MMc

I am glad to hear defended by others the principle that you can't close a church without some difficulty – that the church has some measure of protection.

“Sow and action and you reap a habit”; and if men temporarily vested with some municipal authority are permitted to close the churches upon some judgment; a dangerous precedent might easily be established.

I believe it may be said that, without reflecting upon any individual, the boards of health, sufficiently competent for the duties of ordinary times, are often composed of men lacking the time, the money, the poise, and the character to deal with a great emergency and pass judgment upon delicate and vital questions. In other words, when the church is at the mercy of an incompetent jury, its friends should present its claims as an essential factor in the life of the community.

The time may come when there will be neither mills nor factories; but the time will never come when divine worship – community worship – will not be a necessity. Praise of God upon a Sunday is more essential than any other work in all the world.

Consider the atmospheric conditions in our mills – in plants where the interest of the manufacturer is not always for the good of the worker, but rather for the manufactured goods. Conditions there are not for the best interests of public health; hired workers assemble under conditions advantageous to the spread of disease.

But in church, when they go to Sunday morning services, they have taken care to be cleanly; they are not fatigued physically; they can sit in comfort, in a well-ventilated and heated auditorium; they are at peace in heart and mind.

Contrast conditions in the church with those prevailing in the mills!

Again, take the question of hours. They work 54 hours a week in the mills; they are one hour a week on the Lord's Day, in church.

Our greatest asset is the religious gathering on the Lord's Day; and it is the least menace!

In view of these facts, I cannot stand by and see the church penalized and penalized unfairly.

Our authorities do not close the mills. Why? Well, they are told, the people would not stand for it – the governing powers of big industry would not be pleased. “So”, they say, “we'll close something that will stand for it, even though permitting it to keep open would involve no great danger – we'll close the churches!”

If there is real danger, let us take precautions intelligently and sensibly by striking the disease at the root – quarantining those who are ill. If this cannot be done - if there is not the means – don't ask us to close our churches while the real dangers are allowed to go unchecked.

The doctors do not know everything. Presumably, they are acquainted somewhat with anatomy; but they know little more about psychological influenza upon the body than in the time of St. Paul. And, the man who could diagnose certain cases of disease might be totally unfit to pass upon a great, broad, delicate moral question.

Just last winter the United State Government, as a relief for the coal shortage, closed factories and stores and other vast industries – but forbade to close the churches.

Now our local board of health has the authority, its members say, to do what they choose.

I know I was criticized severely for not closing my church last Sunday, but when it comes to a question of telling me to close my church, I want to know why. I take every step possible to protect the church. If the federal government told me to, I would ask its authority. If force was employed by the government, I would not foster rebellion; but I would have a proper accounting through the United States courts.

AFTERMATH OF MEETING

It was believed that the Lewiston Board of Health would meet and take some decisive vote – but, according to its chairman, it didn't.

He said, when questioned by the Lewiston Evening Journal, that the board adheres firmly to its original decision that all churches must close. When asked what the board will do in case of refusal, the chairman refused to say another word.

Lewiston City Solicitor said of the board of health: "They have absolutely no authority to demand that a place close, especially churches. Nor will they have authority until the constitution of the United States is changed. The constitution says specifically that religious gatherings must not be interfered with."

Mayor Lemaire feels that he has done all that he can do, as mayor, in the present situation. "I am not a member of the Board of Health, even ex-officio. I have worked all through for the best interests of the city, so far as my power went. I called three meetings of the physicians of the city, as I felt they, if anyone, would know best what to do. At every meeting the majority of the physicians has been in favor of closing."

"I do not know what the Board of Health can do, or will do. I presume they know their powers, but I do not. Speaking for myself, I do not see any great harm in the churches being open for short services Sunday, and this attitude I have held since the beginning. However, it is for the physicians and the Board of Health to say, not for me."

Friday, October 11

The Camden Congregational Church vestry has been converted to a hospital and is full of cot beds for the care of the sickness in town.

Saturday, October 12

In Rumford it was decided to use McCarthy Hospital exclusively for influenza cases. An emergency hospital to care for additional influenza cases is being set up at the parochial building.

The town will bear the expenses and be assisted by the Red Cross. The sisters in the convent are also working in the hospital.

The Portland Board of Health today passed an order, which later was approved by Supreme Court Associate Justice Scott Wilson.

The order provided for the closing of churches, theaters, and other places of public assembly in event of an epidemic or a threatened epidemic.

Instructions to hold masses in all the Catholic churches of Portland were then rescinded today by Bishop Louis S. Walsh

This was in deference to a written request by Mayor Charles B. Clarke and the “very reasonable judgment of the medical profession.”

The Bar Harbor Hospital, the isolated hospital, and the hall in the Odd Fellows’ Building, which was converted into an emergency hospital, are completely filled with patients comprised for the most part of men from the local naval reserve station.

Monday, October 14

Local Lewiston and Auburn physicians are working practically day and night, while the number of people needing their attention steadily grows larger. Not only are the doctors overworked, but it is impossible to find help for affected homes where it is needed. Whole families are ill with the disease, with no one to care for them.

All of the Catholic churches of Lewiston held indoor services yesterday, disregarding the closing order of the board of health.

Out of door services were held by the Catholic church in Auburn, in compliance with a request of the Auburn Board of Health.

It is understood the Lewiston health board will take steps tomorrow to get the necessary authority to enforce closing orders in this city.

Portland Editorial

Portland Mayor Clarke and Bishop Walsh are to be congratulated on the happy outcome of the ruling of the Board of Health closing the churches. The universally recognized American standard of the greatest good to the greatest number, controlled the actions of all concerned and what appeared for a time as likely to develop into an unfortunate incident proved to be a rainbow of promise for a bigger, better, brighter, more promising Portland.

Tuesday, October 15

The Red Cross in the Rockland area is playing a great part locally in fighting the epidemic. In addition to other work the women have been busy making gas masks, dish towels, holders, bed socks, stockings, and other articles for which there is great need in the afflicted homes.

Besides this, young women go into the homes where sickness has prostrated the inmates and busy themselves washing dishes, cleaning the house, and doing many services for the sick. Similar work by these helpful young women is done also at the Knox Hospital, washing dishes, arranging trays for the sick, helping in the wards, etc. Through the

Home Service department, soup and bread is furnished the sick in their homes. Here is shown in our midst what the Red Cross means in its thousand activities.

Wednesday, October 16

Secretary Goldthwait of the Bangor Board of Health announced a total of 787 cases of grip in Bangor, although he noted that many cases are going unreported, given that only a few doctors are reporting.

Eastern Maine General Hospital and private hospitals are now not able to accommodate many patients.

Rev. Patrick J. Garrity, rector of St. John's Catholic Church, is giving the use of the girls' catholic high school, which will be able to care for about 30 additional patients.

The Sisters of Mercy will care for patients at the school.

Thursday, October 17

Dr. Bristol asked on Wednesday that \$25,000 be appropriated from the emergency war fund, the state epidemic fund practically having been exhausted, and that the governor appoint a committee, representing the state health department, the U.S. Public Health Service, the Red Cross, and the Maine Committee on Public Safety to have control of the situation and fight the epidemic.

Governor Milliken agreed, and appointed the Special Emergency Influenza Committee to take charge of the situation in the State.

Friday, October 18

The State Prison in Thomaston reports 80 cases of influenza with eight deaths. In order to meet the unusual conditions arising from the influenza epidemic in Rockland, the Narragansett Hotel has been opened as an emergency hospital, for the care of all classes and creeds, and without reference to financial circumstances.

The meeting at which the emergency hospital proposition took form was held in the City Council rooms Tuesday evening. Several physicians spoke in favor of the new emergency hospital, noting that getting the patients concentrated would help provide for their needs, including tending to their sickness, food, and clothing.

Rev Fr. Flynn spoke strongly in favor of such a hospital, but insisted it be a non-denominational affair. The statement of a previous speaker that some of the city's foreign residents might avail themselves of the privilege caused Fr. Flynn to speak warmly on behalf of those who are "considered good Americans on Liberty Loan Days."

In order to carry out the work set in motion by the general emergency epidemic committee of the state and to be prepared for combating the influenza in its district, the Augusta Red Cross has organized a special epidemic committee. Augusta Mayor Swift will have charge of procuring supplies. Mr. Viles will be in charge of nurses, canteen

unit, motor unity, and volunteer nurses. Dr. Coombs will be in charge of supplying doctors and nurses, and is arranging for an emergency hospital. Mrs. Hichborn will be in charge of the collection and distribution of food. The committee's work is headquartered in the Augusta Trust Bank building.

“Thrift is a quality that has been most instrumental in shaping the destinies of men and nations. It is a historical precedent that a nation must be thrifty to be permanently powerful among the nations of the world. Yet, (with the World War and the prevailing epidemic), never before in the history of America was there such urgent need for thrift as at the present time.” From an essay by Carl Beal, of Philips in the Franklin Journal

Saturday, October 19

The relief work movement, inaugurated by the Bangor Daily News Friday, of a volunteer force of helpers to those in distress on account of the prevailing epidemic had an immediate effect, many offers of assistance in various ways being received at Mayor Woodman's office at City Hall during the day.

Several women volunteered as nurses, while many others who could not engage in such work offered their services to cook for those who need aid in that line, and others will give part of their time for cooking and general housework.

A large number of automobiles have been pledged for conveying helpers to and from houses and running errands, and will be available day and night.

It is requested by Mayor Woodman, whose office is headquarters for the relief work inaugurated by the Board of Health and the Red Cross, that all physicians of the city report to his office the families which may be in distress.

Monday, October 21

Mental diseases are likely to develop among persons who have had influenza, according to physicians. Dr. Bailey expresses the opinion that in cases where certain forms of insanity have been dormant, the influenza germ is likely to accelerate extreme emotions. Cases of mental lapse due to the epidemic are already being treated in the psychopathic hospitals.

In accordance with an order issued by the Board of Health and approved by Associate Supreme Court Justice Scott Wilson, all of the churches in Lewiston remained closed Sunday on account of the epidemic of influenza. Out of door masses were held by the Catholic churches. A week ago all Catholic churches in Lewiston held indoor services, disregarding the health board's order.

The emergency hospital in Rockland at the Narragansett Hotel now has 40 patients. Dr. William Ellingwood as its resident physician, and Miss Ethel Bryant, as matron, are in charge of the institution. The hospital's needs are also being met by an emergency hospital committee made up by women from the eight churches in town. Superintendent West then placed at the committee's disposal the service of the city's school teachers,

furnishing relays of workers for the office, kitchen, and sterilizing department. The domestic science teachers are in charge of the kitchen.

The Courier Gazette has been printing the needs for materials, and the citizens of Rockland have responded with great generosity. The articles called for especially were babies' cribs, children's night dresses, blankets, old linen, towels, sheets, and mattresses. Even the children of Rockland are doing their part, by sending their toys to the juvenile patients in the hospital.

Tuesday, October 22

The Maine Anti-Tuberculosis Association issues this pertinent warning:

“Spanish Influenza is undoubtedly due to lack of sunshine and fresh air, to dampness outdoors and in getting wet feet; and is spread by careless spitting, and by coughing and sneezing without covering the mouth.

Therefore, the measure of our patriotism may be indicated just as truly by where we spit and how we cough or sneeze, as by the number of W.S.S we buy or Liberty Bonds we purchase.

That which spreads influenza likewise spreads tuberculosis; and the methods of preventing the one are also effective with the other.”

Thursday, October 24

The influenza situation at Swan's Island is very serious. There are 260 cases out of a population of 800, and there have been 10 deaths. The only doctor on the island, Dr. Gage, is assigned to government duty, and has asked to be relieved of this duty so he can return to the island and care for the sufferers.

Dr. Bristol, Maine's Health Commissioner, states that in general, the influenza conditions are improving in this state, but small towns along the coast and Aroostook are very hard hit.

The influenza situation in Portland has improved to such an extent that the board of health ordered the removal of the ban on public gatherings.

There have been a total of over 8,200 cases of influenza reported there since September 24 with almost 200 deaths, but these records are incomplete, as many cases, especially early on, went unreported.

Conditions due to Spanish Influenza on the government railroads just across the St. John River from Van Buren, are such that the business of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad is stalled at that point.

The Canadian road is completely tied up. Shipments of pulpwood to various points to Maine are thus made impossible and the Canadian road is refusing B&A cars at the point.

Saturday, November 2

The influenza epidemic which has caused so much suffering in Portland, has passed its climax, but it has left behind weakness and desolation. Many families which have always been self-supporting have lost their providers.

Others are weakened by sickness so that they cannot at once resume their normal activities.

Thursday, November 7

The epidemic of influenza has hit some Aroostook towns pretty hard.

In Caribou, the Knights of Columbus Hall was opened as an emergency hospital, with materials kindly supplied by citizens.

Caribou has been unfortunate to have so few physicians at this particular time, and the few available are working day and night.

Monday, November 11

At 11AM on November 11th, 1918, World War I officially ended, as the Armistice is signed with Germany.

Worldwide, 10 million died from the war, 20 million wounded.

The “war to end all wars” or “the Great War” resulted in the League of Nations, but also to a new kind of warfare that harnessed the powers of air, chemicals, tanks, and artillery, which then laid the groundwork for World War II.

Monday, November 18

Le Madawaska

La main de Dieu s'est abattue sur notre population. Grand est le nombre des familles qui ont vu partir qui une mere, qui un pere, qui des freres, qui des soeurs. Les vides sont nombreux et le denil regne partout. Peu sont les familles qui n'ont pas ete eprouvees. Jamais un pareil fleau a visite notre pays.

L'epidemie semble avoir ete apportee ici par un train de soldats venu de la Nouvelle-Ecosse. Le train parti avec un contingent de 500 (cinq cents) soldats tous en bonne sante arrive a Edmundston le 26 (vingt six) Septembre avec six soldats souffrant d'influenza.

Tuesday, November 19

Dr. Bristol stated that he firmly believes new legislation is needed by which the State Department is given greater power, and he will urge this upon the legislature that sits in January.

He said, “At the present time, the State Department has no authority that will permit it to assume charge of a situation such as has faced Maine during the past few months.

All the work that has been done has been in assisting the local boards. A law should be passed that would give the State Department full power to handle an epidemic of any kind without interference from a local board.

Additionally, a number of physicians and local boards of health have not done their duty in making daily reports of disease.”

Tuesday, December 3

The appalling ravages of Spanish Influenza in this country are perhaps best realized by the statement recently made, that more deaths have resulted in little more than a month from this disease than our whole participation in the battles of the European War.

Our greatest danger now, declare authorities, is the great American tendency to forget easily and to believe the peril is over.

AFTERMATH OF 1918 EPIDEMIC

Influenza waxed and waned in Maine throughout late 1918 and the first six months of 1919.

The 1918 State Department of Health report states that Maine “was one of the first in the U.S. to take action requiring influenza to be reported by physicians to local boards of health, and by the latter to the State Dept of Health; and giving local boards of health authority to institute modified quarantine.”

The Report goes on to describe the work of the Emergency Influenza Committee, convened by Governor Milliken.

- “Dr. Bristol, State Health Commissioner, directed the general work of the Emergency Influenza Committee, based on the needs of the various local communities, as expressed to him in reports from local boards of health and local Red Cross Chapters.
- Mr. Sewell, representing the State Public Safety Committee, rendered service in the ordering and collection of equipment and supplies for emergency hospitals.
- Mr. Smith, representing the Red Cross, obtained nurses and directed the problems of transportation and the opening of emergency hospitals.
- Dr. Preble from the US Public Health Service, obtained special physicians and nurses for local communities.

The Committee worked in special offices set up in the Blaine Mansion.”

Maine 1918 – Pandemic Impact in Maine

In reviewing the 1918 and 1919 Maine Department of Health reports, the statistical impact of the 1918 Pandemic with Influenza on Maine is astounding:

Between September 1918 and May 1919:

- Almost 47,000 cases reported of influenza, though it did not become reportable until early October, and even then, the Department of Health and newspapers claimed the disease was underreported by many physicians.
- From September to December, 1918 there are 3,800 deaths from influenza recorded;
- The first 5 months of 1919, about 1,200 deaths
- For a total of about 5,000 deaths
- One-half of these 5,000 deaths were reported to be from two causes, in which one was influenza.
- Besides pneumonia, the other leading associated causes of death were pregnancy, tuberculosis, and heart disease. Indeed, newspaper reports across Maine noted the tragic association of pregnancy and death from influenza.
- The death rate from influenza in the preceding years ranged from 1 to 6 per 10,000. In 1918, that death rate was 32.
- One-half of these 5,000 deaths were in the month of October, 1918.
- About 50% of those who died were ages 20 – 40. The years preceding the pandemic, 3% of deaths from influenza were in this age group.
- Although one well known book on the 1918 pandemic reports northern Maine as having escaped the effects of this event, Department of Health reports and area newspapers from the time confirm Aroostook County with the highest reported death rate in Maine. Cumberland also endured high fatality rates.
- Although some areas of central Maine reported lower mortality, reporting was overall very sporadic and dependent on individual physicians, so county comparisons are limited.
- In 1 ½ years of American combat in WWI, 1,026 Mainers died while serving in the military.
- Over half of these died from influenza.

1918 Pandemic - National Impact

- Nationally, about 675,000 died from influenza out of 105 million total population

- The death rate was higher in 1918 than in any year in the U.S. before or since. In 1 ½ years of combat during WWI, the U.S. Army lost 34,000. 24,000 of them died from the influenza during the 8 weeks in the fall of 1918. Nearly 3 times as many American soldiers died of influenza as died in action against the enemy.
- Virtually all of the deaths among American sailors in WWI were from influenza – 5,000 of them.
- In 1 ½ years of war, nearly 18 as many Americans died from the epidemic than from the war.

1918 Pandemic - Worldwide Impact

- The pandemic killed 50-100 million
- It killed 5-10% of the world's young adults
- By contrast, 21 million died over 4 years as a result of WWI
- Previous pandemics such as the Black Death and the Plague killed greater percentages of the population, but they took years to do what influenza accomplished in weeks

The impacts here in Maine on public health and health care were fairly immediate. For instance, in January of 1919, the Maine Department of Health wasted no time in having legislation introduced. Dr. Bristol appeared to have strong support, as virtually his entire proposal became law.

For instance,

- A State Law was enacted requiring all public schools to instruct personal hygiene, community sanitation, and physical education.
- The appropriation of the Department of Health was more than doubled – from \$34,000 to \$76,000 per year. Their appropriation in 1916 had only been \$8,000.
- All Local Health Officers came under the supervision of the State Commissioner of Health.
- Local boards of health became optional, and all the powers of these boards came under the control and direction of the State Department of Health.
- Adjoining towns could pull together and hire a full-time health officer, if approved by the Commissioner of Health. If this health officer met certain requirements and approval by the Commissioner, the State would pay one-third of the salary.
- State Health District Officers increased from 3 to 8.

Maine 1918 Aftermath - Isolation Ward at MMC

Maine General Hospital in Portland, now known as Maine Medical Center, built an isolation ward. Their 1918 annual report describes the conditions during the pandemic:

“On September 19th appeared in the hospital the first case of Epidemic Influenza...We filled all available space in the old unused amphitheater with influenza cases...No cases were admitted to the Hospital proper since strict isolation was deemed an advisable procedure.

It was extremely difficult to do work with these extemporaneous facilities...This experience only accentuates the great need of the Hospital for a conversion of this building into isolation wards.”

Maine 1918 - Emergency Medical/Nursing Corps

The Maine Department of Health built an emergency corps of physicians and nurses, with the help of the Maine Medical Association. The Journal of the Maine Medical Association in October 1919 ran an editorial urging its members to volunteer for the emergency corps.

By November, 1919, the Journal noted: “288 out of 1,175 physicians have already volunteered for emergency influenza work if the need should arise. If called up, they would be placed upon the payroll of the U.S. Public Health Service.

In this way the State Commissioner of Health has in hand an emergency corps of physicians to throw into the field should the necessity arise for combating influenza in epidemic form...Dr. Bristol has obtained the promise from the American Red Cross to supply nursing service in such an emergency if needed, and the Red Cross has someone designated to direct such nursing work under Dr. Bristol’s supervision.”

Maine 1918 Aftermath Improved Disease Surveillance

Routine disease surveillance in Maine also improved as a result of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, most disease reporting was in response to physicians needing assistance from the State Board of Health.

After the pandemic, the State Department of Health urged routine reporting of certain diseases such as influenza for the purpose of tracking their spread. The Journal of the Maine Medical Association in November 1919 urged its members to report any cases of influenza to local boards of health, stating that 544 physicians had already agreed to do such reporting.

Maine 1918 Aftermath Evidence Today of Pandemic – Bath

There are small signs scattered across our state even today, leaving evidence of the impact of the 1918 pandemic. One example is in the Bath-Brunswick area. This city was more vulnerable to the impact of influenza because its population had recently doubled to nearly 20,000 as a result of wartime jobs in the shipyard. In a matter of weeks, Bath saw more than 3,000 cases of influenza.

Although Bath had its own hospital, 4 additional makeshift hospitals were set up. For two weeks in mid-late October, all public gatherings were closed. Tagging of houses with white cards and red letters tacked to the doors warned people not to enter because of

influenza in the household. As in other Maine towns, influenza outbreaks visited twice more over the coming months. Among those who succumbed to the infection in Bath were three nurses who volunteered to assist the city: Harriet Bliss, age 28, Alice Dain, age 29, and Adelaide Hogue, age 34. As evidence of the pandemic's effects, a commemorative plaque still hangs today at MidCoast Hospital, in honor of these young women.

Women's Suffrage

Some of the pandemic's impact may not all be negative. The need for women during WWI and the pandemic may have contributed to the passage of the right of women to vote.

Indeed, the U.S. Congress finally ratified the 19th amendment to the constitution, granting women the right to vote in the spring of 1919, just after both the war and the pandemic ended.

Maine too finally ratified the 19th Amendment, but hit a bump in the road when it was suspended by a People's Veto.

However, by 1920, women in Maine and across the country were finally able to vote in a presidential election.

Silent Epidemic

Some well known people who died from influenza included:

Sir William Osler, the father of American medicine

The King of Spain

Son of the French Premier and

Sons and daughters of several US Congressmen.

But, the epidemic has also been called the Silent Epidemic.

President Woodrow Wilson never spoke publicly about the pandemic. It was felt he did not want to detract from the war or demoralize the public. History books even today speak about the stroke he had during the Paris peace negotiations in April of 1919. However, we know now that it was influenza which almost felled him.

Newspapers also played into the war propaganda – very often portraying the impact of the epidemic in overly optimistic light. Since many of the dead were young adults, they did not have the opportunity to fulfill their life's mission, and therefore their absence was often silent in public spheres.

The 36-year old Assistant Secretary of the Navy was carried off a troopship in September 1918, too ill with influenza to walk. He recuperated for several weeks at his mother's home. Fortunately, for us, Franklin Delano Roosevelt went on to do other things in his life. How many others with such great promise as FDR died in the pandemic we'll never know – they never had a chance to earn their fame.

The pandemic causes many what “might have happened if so-and-so had lived”. Indeed, we’ll never really know the full impact of the 1918 pandemic.

LESSONS LEARNED

What lessons can we learn from 1918?

Even from this brief look into the reporting in Maine of the impact of the 1918 pandemic, we believe there are numerous lessons as relevant today as they were then. We see from 1918 in Maine the:

- Private and public sectors working together
- Importance of the media
- Drain of resources WWI had on the ability to respond to the epidemic
- Impact of the pandemic on essential services
- Enormous needs for non-medical assistance
- Tremendous effect on vulnerable populations such as Lewiston’s French population

QUESTIONS ASKED, NOT ANSWERED STILL TODAY

In addition to numerous lessons we can learn from Maine’s response to the 1918 pandemic, there are also some questions we are left with – some not fully answered. Monsignor McDonough’s question: “what is essential to community?” Do we know that answer today? If we were to close non-essential public gatherings today, what would they be? Schools? Churches? BIW? Restaurants? The Maine Mall? The Legislature?

Who is most vulnerable in our communities today? Immigrants? The poor? Disabled? These questions and lessons from 1918 are with us today. And, that’s why today we are gathered – to ask questions, to learn together and move forward to improve our preparedness.