

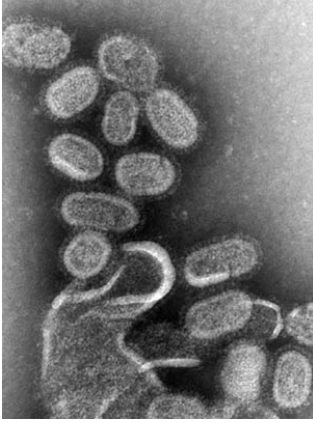
The Flu of 1918: Attack on the Homefront

By Caitlyn Alexander
and Nancy Sorrells

Editor's note: Mary Baldwin University student Caitlyn Alexander participated in an internship with the Augusta County Historical Society in the fall of 2018. The focus of her work was to research and understand the effects of the global influenza pandemic in 1918 and, in particular, the effects of that pandemic on the local communities of Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County. Together with Society board member Nancy Sorrells, who directed her internship at the historical society, they gave a presentation on their research at Second Presbyterian Church in Staunton as part of a community-wide, week-long series of events commemorating the centennial of World War I. This paper is a product of their research and presentation.

One hundred years ago in the fall of 1918, World War I was drawing to a close although the heaviest fighting for men from the Staunton-Waynesboro-Augusta County community was yet to come. The campaign that ended the war—the Meuse-Argonne Campaign—involved many local men in the military and the bitter fighting resulted in a high casualty rate. When the war ended on November 11, 1918, sixteen million people around the





The 1918 influenza virus as seen under the microscope.

world had perished as a result of the conflict, including 117,000 Americans, about sixty of whom were from the Augusta County area.

But that number, as staggering as it is, paled in comparison to the second, deadlier event that was occurring simultaneously—the influenza pandemic that began in the late summer and peaked in the fall of 1918. The global pandemic, which still counts as the deadliest human pandemic in recorded human history, took between fifty and one hundred million lives, or close to five percent of the world's population according to sources that have studied the event.

The term “influenza” is an Italian word coined by victims of the flu in the eighteenth century, which translates to “influence of the cold.”¹ Influenza is a respiratory disease that is spread through one of two ways. The first way that the flu is spread is through droplets of mucus that are sprayed in the air when people fail to properly cover their nose or mouth when coughing or sneezing.² The second way that this disease is spread is through direct physical contact between someone who is sick and someone who is not.³

The pandemic came to be erroneously called the Spanish flu, probably because when the global pandemic reached Spain in the spring of 1918, news of the outbreak received uncensored journalistic attention because Spain was not involved in World War I. The reality is that the deadly strain of the virus originated in Fort Riley, Kansas, where it picked up a strain of avian flu and that “super virus” then quickly spread through the ranks of the soldiers training there in preparation for heading to Europe.⁴

The flu virus spreads through the world's population each year; however, the particular strain of flu that was present in 1918-1919 was like no other that had been seen before. With most strains of influenza, individuals sicken for only a few days with symptoms that include chills, fevers, aches and pains, runny nose, and congestion. After these symptoms

have passed, they usually recover, but with the flu of 1918, this was often not the case. In addition, the highest mortality rate for influenza is usually among those who are very young or very old or who have compromised immune systems. In the case of the flu pandemic that is the subject of this paper, the highest mortality occurred in young adults who were the most physically fit and who had the strongest immune systems. Those victims, often young men serving in the military, sickened with the flu, and then immediately become deathly ill, and died within hours or days because they developed a secondary bacterial infection after the fourth or fifth day of having the flu – most often pneumonia, but also sometimes an inflammation of the ear or meningitis.⁵⁶ In some cases, this secondary infection would be fatal, and in others it was just something that an individual had to deal with until it too had passed.⁷

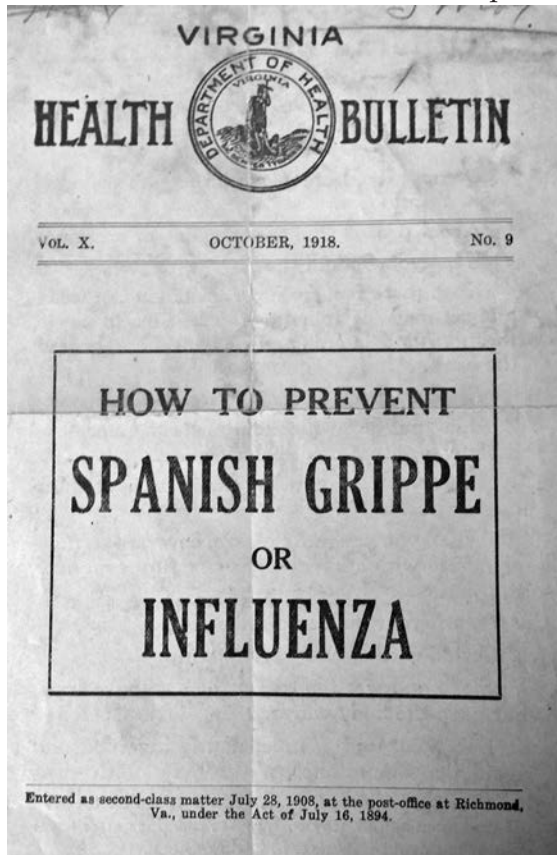
The fascination that many individuals have with the flu pandemic of 1918 is that this disease spread rapidly and had a high incidence of mortality among the healthiest populations. The estimation for the total number of lives taken varies from source to source. Some sources estimate a loss of 675,000 Americans, 43,000 of which were servicemen involved in World War I.⁸ Worldwide it is estimated that twenty to forty million people lost their lives to this disease, far more than died as a result of the world war.⁹ Despite the different estimates of how many lives were lost, this flu is notorious for being the flu that killed many people between the ages of twenty and fifty.¹⁰

This particular flu pandemic is noted as having occurred in three waves that traveled the globe. The first wave occurred in the spring and summer of 1918.¹¹ The second wave of the flu occurred in the fall of 1918, around August, and is recognized as the wave that caused the most fatalities.¹² It was during this wave of the flu that Staunton and its surrounding areas were affected most by the flu. The third and final wave of the flu began in the winter of 1918 and ended in the spring of 1919.¹³ The spread of the disease was exacerbated by the gathering together of hundreds of thousands of young men who were in the military and preparing for war.

The truly amazing aspect of this flu is how quickly it traveled across the globe and how quickly people became infected. The easiest way to describe how quickly this virus spread is to examine an early outbreak of the virus in Boston, Massachusetts. During the second wave of the flu, it arrived in Boston at some point in August. On August 28, there were eight navy men sick with the flu. The next day, that number increased to fifty-eight. By day four, eighty-one people were sick. A week later, there

were 119 sick members of the military and one civilian who had been admitted with the flu. By September 8, three people had died—a man in the Navy, a merchant marine, and a civilian.¹⁴

The flu pandemic of 1918 swept the globe, and residents of Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County were not able to escape its devastating effects. People across all spectra of society were struck down with the flu and there appeared to be no way to stop the spread. Staunton has always been home to a number of schools and institutions. Examining several of those institutions in order to understand how the epidemic affected them in the context of their relationship with the rest of the city is interesting. Mary Baldwin Seminary (today Mary Baldwin University), a prominent institution in Staunton since 1842, was fortunate to have had very little exposure to the flu, but the epidemic was nonetheless on the minds of the administration. In the board meeting minutes from 1918-1919, there's a passage that describes the effect that the flu had upon the seminary.



A flyer published by the Virginia Department of Health listed ways in which people could protect themselves from the flu. (ACHS archives)

Since our last stated meeting the prevalence of "influenza" in the community has caused us some anxiety as to the effect upon the Seminary, and for a time we deemed it prudent to establish [inaugurate] a strict quarantine, upon the suggestion of Dr. Rankin, The Seminary physician. During the period of the quarantine, services were regularly held on Sabbath mornings for the scholars with preaching by Dr. Fraser, Gypsy Smith, and the Rev. Mr. Sprouse. Not a single case of influenza had occurred in the Seminary up to the time when it closed for the Christmas holidays. There were, however, six cases of typhoid fever of a light form, five of which were removed to the King's Daughters' Hospital. None of them were proved serious.¹⁵

It was not until the students returned from the Christmas holidays that cases of influenza were found at Mary Baldwin. In January of 1919, a number of cases were reported and the seminary had to hire four new nurses as a result; however, none of the cases was serious and there was no loss of life at the school.¹⁶

Staunton and many of the other institutions were not as lucky during this same time period. A quick look at Staunton newspaper articles ranging from September 20, 1918, until October 15, 1918, showed approximately twenty-six articles about the flu, often times referred to as the "Spanish Influenza."¹⁷ This number does not include the numerous war casualty lists that were posted in each issue and many of the young men on the casualty list were victims of influenza. During the month of September, there were seven articles posted in the newspaper about the flu. All seven articles spoke of the number of new cases that were developing nationally and how quickly it was spreading. On September 25 two articles appeared in the local newspaper. One article entitled "2,943 new cases of the Spanish Influenza have developed" stated that there were a large number of new cases of influenza developing and that many of the deaths that followed the disease were not due to the disease itself, but to pneumonia, which was an unfortunate after effect of the flu that took many lives.¹⁸ In October, there were nineteen articles posted about the flu, with October 10 being the day with the highest number of articles.¹⁹ Those articles were titled "Quarantine Notice," "Attorney J. E. Pifer dies suddenly from influenza," "13,605 new cases of influenza show it's not abating," "Pneumonia: How to Prevent It," and "Spanish Influenza: Some facts about it and how to prevent its spread."²⁰

For the local citizenry, bad news seemed to come in waves. Not only was the area receiving news of the alarming spread of influenza, but they were receiving news of the war raging in Europe. At times, those two issues

PNEUMONIA CLAIMS HENRY O. TILMAN AT HOME IN SALTVILLE

The Remains, Accompanied by Parents of Deceased, Will Arrive Here This Afternoon.

The remains of Henry O. Tilman, twenty-seven years of age, who died at his home in Saltville, Va., late Monday night after a brief illness with influenza and pneumonia, will arrive in Staunton this evening accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. H. N. Tilman, who were summonsed to Saltville by their son's illness.

Funeral arrangements will be announced upon the arrival of the funeral party.

Mr. Tilman was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. H. N. Tilman and was well known here. He graduated from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute at Blacksburg, and had gained a reputation as a chemist. His wife, who was a Mrs. Sanders of Saltville, survives him, as do two small children; his parents and one brother, Garland.

W. R. HEVENER IS VICTIM OF INFLUENZA WHILE AT NORFOLK

W. R. Hevener, who three weeks ago tomorrow left this city to enter the Navy in which he had previously enlisted, was stricken with influenza Sunday. He died after a few hours sickness. The body will be brought here for burial.

Mr. Hevener was twenty-one years of age on the Fourth of July, last. He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Hevener, of near Staunton, three sisters, Misses Blanche and Beulah and Mrs. Edwin Leavell, and one brother, Harry. He was a nephew of W. H. Snyder, pressman for The Daily News.

Mr. Hevener was a young man of splendid habits, and was esteemed by his many friends. His sudden death was a shock to the family and to his friends.

BIG DEATH RATE

(By The Associated Press.)

WASHINGTON, Oct. 5.—Spanish influenza spread more rapidly during the twenty-four hours ending today noon, than in any similar period since the disease became epidemic. Reports to the office of the surgeon general of the army showed 17,323 cases in army camps. The new cases represented an increase of 4,498 in comparison with the number reported for preceding twenty-four period. A total of 2,141 new pneumonia cases were reported, an increase of 257. Deaths at camp totalled 452, an increase of 199.

A few of the dozens of articles that appeared in the Staunton newspapers in the fall of 1918.

intersected. Of the approximately sixty local military men who died as a result of the war, over half died from non-combat related issues, mostly from the flu. That nexus of military concern and influenza concern was driven home by the headlines on the front page of the *Staunton Morning Leader* on October 1, 1918. The two largest headlines were: "Bulgaria Quits; Turkey's Fall Is Imminent," and "Entire German Defensive Line Is Crumbling Under Pressure." The next largest headline after that read: "Two Soldier Brothers Die Within Week." That headline described the sad tale of the Beard brothers, both serving in the army at two different training camps, one in Virginia and one in New Jersey. The two brothers died of the flu within a week of each other. Their bodies were shipped home and laid to rest after a double funeral at Bethel Presbyterian Church near Greenville.²¹

Several of the articles posted during the month of October, when the flu was raging seemingly unchecked through the country, were about "Spanish Influenza" and ways that a person could prevent himself personally as well as loved ones from getting it. "Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases," read a notice in the newspaper. The local health departments issued a flyer that was widely distributed advising citizens how best to "Prevent Spanish Grippe or Influenza."²²

The flyer information was freely reprinted in the newspaper and contained such advice as "Keep away from crowds," "Don't use a cup used by others without thoroughly washing it," and "Don't put into your mouth fingers, pencils or other things that don't belong there."

The local drug stores offered information and advice as well. Druggist Thomas Hogshead advertised that "Every glass and spoon at our foundation [is] dipped in solution Chloride of Lime, the most powerful disinfectant and germ destroyer known." The store also advertised that they had received a large shipment of formaldehyde candles for fumigating an area after someone was sick. Bell's Drug Store sold a "petroleum emulsion" to aid in the healing process after the flu, and Willson Brothers Drug Store sold "Rexall Syrup of Hypophosphites to help renew strength after illness. The tonic had as its ingredients lime, soda, potash, quinine, and strychnine!"²³

Despite various precautions, including requiring face masks in many public places, the numbers of those stricken continued to rise. Feeling helpless as the disease continued to spread, both the city of Staunton and Augusta County issued quarantine notices and set up temporary hospitals in places such as the closed schools, to treat the victims.

Every glass and spoon at our fountain dipped in solution Chloride of Lime, the most powerful disinfectant and germ destroyer known.

Thos. Hogshead
Quality Counts

HAS PREVENTED INFLUENZA

Indian Liver & Stomach Tonic is a most powerful internal Antiseptic and we do not know of a case of influenza, where this great remedy has been used.

\$1.00 bottle for 50 cts.

Thos. Hogshead
ONLY
Quality Counts

Advertisements such as these were common in the local Staunton newspaper.

of having the packages placed on board.

RENEW YOUR STRENGTH

Keep strong and healthy and you will miss the FLU. If you have had the FLU there is nothing that will build you up quicker than

Rexall Syrup Of Hypophosphites

This preparation consists of the hypophosphites of lime, soda, potash, quinine and strychnine. As a system builder and a general tonic to stimulate the appetite and renew your strength there is nothing better. Guaranteed to give results or your money back.

WILLSON BROS.,
Druggists

The Staunton quarantine notice, posted by the city board of health, went into effect at noon on October 9. It announced that

In order to prevent further spread and to take all reasonable precaution again the epidemic of Spanish Influenza raging through the country, the City Board of Health, in conjunction with the State Board, hereby order that all public schools, including the business colleges, be closed, that all private schools be rigidly quarantined, (day pupils are not allowed to attend) that all moving picture shows and theatres be closed and that no further meetings or gatherings of any kind whatever be held until further notice is officially given by the Board of Health.²⁴

CITY UNDER QUARANTINE; GATHERINGS PROHIBITED

CHURCHES, SHOWS AND SCHOOLS ARE FORCED TO CLOSE

The above proclamation was issued by the Board of Health for the City of Staunton during the morning. The board met Tuesday afternoon and agreed that such a step be taken, but wired the State Health Commissioner, Dr. Hanson G. Williams, asking his approval. His reply, received early this morning, informed the local authorities that the action taken was entirely proper and necessary.

As stated in the quarantine notice "no further meetings or gatherings of any kind whatever" are to be held until further notice. This affects all public schools, including business colleges, the strict quarantining of private schools, to which day pupils will not be permitted to attend, moving picture shows and theatres. Although the proclamation does not state it specifically, yet the order affects churches, Sunday Schools, and other gatherings of a religious nature.

As a department of the city public school system, the night school will also be closed until the quarantine is lifted.

Ministers Cooperate

Meeting during the morning before the health board's edict was made public, the Staunton Ministerial Association passed the following resolution:

"Resolved: that we heartily cooperate with the City Board of Health in whatever action it may deem best to take in regard to the spread of Spanish influenza.

W. W. SPROUSE, Clerk.

Present at this meeting were Rev. Dr. W. N. Scott, who presided; Rev. A. M. Fraser, Rev. Dr. T. O. Kelster, Rev. M. D. Mitchell and Rev. W. W. Sprouse.

Owing to the closing order there will be no prayer meeting held in any of the churches this evening, and the protracted service at the Third Presbyterian church has been discontinued by the pastor.

Rally To Be Postponed.

Tuesday evening J. H. C. Grasty, president of the Augusta County Farmers' Union, received a telegram from Health Commissioner Williams which stated that it would not be wise to hold the big Liberty Loan rally here on Saturday. Mr. Grasty wired Dr. Williams concerning the advisability of having the meeting. It has been postponed.

(Continued On Page six.)

FOURTH L. L.

QUARANTINE NOTICE

In order to prevent further spread and to take all reasonable precaution against the epidemic of Spanish Influenza raging throughout the country, the City Board of Health, in conjunction with the State Board, hereby order that all public schools, including the business colleges, be closed, that all private schools be rigidly quarantined, (day pupils are not allowed to attend) that all moving picture shows and theatres be closed and that no further meetings or gatherings of any kind whatever be held until further notice is officially given by the Board of Health.

Attention of the public is called to the precautionary measures now being given out by the State Board of Health which are printed in pamphlet form and in the newspapers. You are urged to follow these rules as far as possible and thereby assist the Board in making this quarantine effective. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the importance of saving our city from an epidemic of this disease. With the great scarcity of doctors and nurses preventive methods MUST be used.

This order becomes effective at noon, 12 o'clock, October 9, 1918.

BOARD OF HEALTH,
For the City of Staunton.

GOVERNMENT AND COMPANY AGREE

Theodore N. Vail, president of the American Bell Telephone Company, announces that a satisfactory basis of compensation for the Bell system under Government control has been arranged. He states that the Government has acted very fairly toward the company, permitting it to continue all of its ordinary operations, including pensions to aged employees, and the employment of all the men in its various departments needed to keep the company up to the highest standard of efficiency. A satisfactory arrangement was also made for making proper dividends on the stock, so that the owners of the company may not lose their regular income from the property.

Persons whose interest in the company makes it desirable for them to secure more detailed information of the plan of agreement may secure it by writing to the company's headquarters in New York City.

FORMER PREMIER SHOT.

[By The Associated Press.]
Stockholm, Oct. 9.—Alexander Feodorovich Trepoff, a former Russian Premier, has been shot, according to Petrograd advices received today.

DR. HENKLE LEAVES.

Dr. Homer S. Henkel, First Lieutenant in the Medical Reserve Corps, left during the day to report for duty at Camp Greene, Charlotte, N. C.

HEALTH EXPERTS ISSUE RULE FOR SODA FOUNTAINS

RICHMOND, Va., Oct. 9.—Restrictions placed upon the soft drink establishments as a preventive against the spread of the epidemic were moderated yesterday. Vendors of soft drinks, under the new order, may dispense bottled goods. The buyer cannot be served with a glass, but if the dealer has a supply of sanitary paper drinking cups he is permitted to give the customer one of these with his bottled beverage.

No drinks may be served from the soda fountain. Ice cream may be sold, if served in paper boxes or cones. Contact with spoon or glass by the customer is prohibited. In lunch rooms milk must be served in the bottle only and ice cream in the sanitary-individual saucer, which may be used only by a single consumer.

MEETINGS POSTPONED

The meeting of the Ladies Aid Society, of Christ Lutheran church, which was to have been held Thursday, has been postponed. The Women's Missionary Society of Central Methodist church has postponed the meeting to have been held on Friday afternoon.

On account of the quarantine there will be no prayer meetings Thursday morning.

4 PLANES—20 MINUTES.

[By The Associated Press.]
Paris, Oct. 9.—Lieutenant Fonck has brought down four airplanes in twenty minutes, making several official victories.

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This Loan is Loan. I "Victory any ever merican as big a you can Make

COUNTY HEALTH BOARD PUTS BAN ON GATHERINGS

Staunton, Va., Oct. 8, '18.

"Owing to the further development of "Spanish Influenza" in the last two days in the County, the Board of Health met today and determined to close all of the public schools in the County until further notice, Churches, Sunday Schools and moving picture shows are also closed, and all public meetings of whatever nature are prohibited.

"The attention of the public is called to the seriousness of this disease and to the havoc that is being wrought in near-by places, not to travel about more than absolutely necessary and to keep their children at home all of the time.

"Physicians and nurses are advised to wear gauze masks while attending the sick in all cases and to segregate the causes occurring in a home as far as possible, to prevent complications.

"THE BOARD OF HEALTH REALIZES THAT THESE QUARANTINE MEASURES WILL BE OF NO AVAIL UNLESS THEY HAVE THE HEARTY CO-OPERATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN CARRYING THEM OUT.

"This is not only for the protection of the members of each individual family, but for the protection of your neighbor and the community, and these simple safe guards will save the State and the Country from an epidemic which threatens us."

AUGUSTA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH.

Dr. H. M. Wallace, Secretary and Health Officer.

GLASGOW ASKS FOR SUPPORT IN PRESENT CRISIS

To the Liberty Loan Workers of Augusta County and the City of Staunton:

As Chairman of the Liberty Loan Committee, I have been trying in every way possible to make this drive a success. Speaking engagements had been arranged for all parts of the county, but now, on account of the influenza, the health board of the county has ordered a suspension of all public meetings.

Under these circumstances, I must make the strongest appeal that it is possible for me to make to the patriotic people and particularly to the Liberty Loan workers and solicitors of this county and city to take up this work and, even at heavy sacrifice, to devote a sufficient part of their time to this work to make it a success.

Let the committees of the different districts of the county and city meet together and arrange for systematic solicitation of the people of the county. This is the only thing that is left to me as your Chairman, and I make this appeal in the name of two thousand Augusta County boys who are either "over

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In October of 1918 both Staunton (previous page) and Augusta County issued quarantines, as can be see from these two articles in the Staunton newspaper.

**FLU SITUATION
IN THE COUNTY
IS UNPLEASING**

Dr. H. W. Wallace, County Health Officer, is not at all pleased with the influenza situation in Augusta County. Speaking to a Leader representative he declared:

"The situation as regards influenza has not improved in the last forty-eight hours at Waynesboro, Basic City, Crimora, and Stuarts Draft. It is also spreading some into the outlying districts.

"I realize that in an extensive epidemic like that it is impossible to maintain an absolute quarantine but those families that have it must isolate themselves and the people should not go about so much. Above all there should be a more extensive use of the face mask.

"I think the Red Cross Auxiliaries could make up a lot of these. Mrs. Hanger has instructions for making them."

LOCAL MEN PICTURED

In the pictorial section of The

**CLOSE SCHOOLS
IN THE COUNTY**

**BOARD OF HEALTH URGES CO-OPERATION OF THE PEOPLE
IN SAFEGUARDING HEALTH.**

NO PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Churches, Sunday Schools and Public Gatherings of Every Kind in
County are Prohibited.**

Owing to the further develop-

Institutions like Western State Hospital for the mentally ill that was located on the edge of the city were affected by the flu as well, while other places like the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind were able to avoid it altogether by strictly adhering to the quarantine. According to Western State's Annual Report of 1919, there were two hundred cases reported, and fifteen of those died from influenza.²⁵ The annual report also shows that there were forty-eight people who died of pneumonia, which was often what killed victims of the flu.²⁶ Information from the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind (VSDB) shows that as soon as school officials had any indication that their school was in danger, they implemented a quarantine that prevented students from leaving the grounds until further notice.²⁷ In doing so, they were able to keep the flu out of the school, keeping all of the children safe and healthy.²⁸

The VSDB newspaper provided an interesting description of the city quarantine:

Church services were suspended; the public schools, theatres, billiard rooms, and bowling alleys closed; and crowds were not allowed to congregate at the railroad stations or on the streets. The police had no trouble in enforcing these regulations for the public showed a willingness to co-operate with the authorities in checking the disease at the outset. The few cases which have occurred have been closely quarantined, and the Seminary students and cadets of the Military Academy have been kept within bounds. People have been going about their daily occupations as usual and business generally has not been seriously affected.²⁹

The newspaper did bemoan the fact that the “epidemic of influenza broke up all the plans our football team had made for the fall campaign,” but otherwise noted that the students were “glad to get down street again... after being under quarantine for weeks.”³⁰ The Staunton quarantine was in place until October 31, 1918, when another article titled “Quarantine is Lifted by the Board of Health” was posted.³¹

After agonizing for several days and putting special rules into effect that required public school teachers to inspect pupils each day for signs of illness, Augusta County finally announced a quarantine at the same time as did Staunton, issuing the following statement.

Owing to the further development of “Spanish Influenza” in the last two days in the County, the Board of Health met today and determined to close all of the public schools in the County until further notice. Churches, Sunday Schools and moving picture shows are also closed, and all public meetings of whatever nature are prohibited.³²

The announcement went on to admonish the people as to the “seriousness of this disease and to the havoc that is being wrought.” People were advised to keep children home at all times and physicians and nurses were advised to wear gauze masks. The quarantine was necessary, said the Augusta County Board of Health, “for the protection of the members of each individual family, [and]...” of your neighbor and the community...³³

The helplessness and near-panic of the community is reflected in some of the surviving descriptions by people who lived through the epidemic. Stuarts Draft’s Bessie Bridge Hailey (1900-1986) wrote of the incident in her journal. She had been working in Staunton and had to come home because she had been working with a woman who contracted the flu.

By the end of the September, I had been with a lady, Miss Dell Dodd, who had the influenza and, of course, I had to leave and go home, for it was very dangerous. A few days after I was home, one of the older brothers took this flu and the whole family got it, all in bed at one time, with no one to wait on us. Everyone was scared of it and some neighbors



FACE MASKS WILL BE WORN IN OFFICE OF LOCAL DRAFT BOARD

Face masks of light cloth are being used by members of the office force of the local board, where so many people call during the day. It was noticed yesterday that travellers coming from Richmond wore this protection against the influenza. No laughs were produced by the strange appearance of the procession of travellers from the station, each wearing this face mask. Too much wisdom is shown by the adoption of the precaution to cause mirth.

Face masks were often required by those going out in public as can be seen in the top photograph as well as the newspaper article from the Staunton newspaper.

brought food to the door and left it. Herbert, Lum and Carl Hatter, who lived about five miles away, heard of our need and they came and did what they could for us, as they had already had it.

Dr. W.B. Dodge came to see about us and he took Oscar, my oldest brother, and me to Stuarts Draft School, which had been turned into a hospital to help take care of the people who needed attention. A lady next to my bed had a nightmare one night and came to my bed and was going to roll me out and I was scared.³⁴

Hailey's journal account is corroborated by a November 5, 1918, article found in the Staunton newspaper. The article recounts the fact that in Stuarts Draft the closed school house was turned into a temporary hospital for influenza patients for two weeks in October. Dr. W.B. Dodge was indeed one of two physicians at the hospital, the other being Dr. D.T. Gochenour. There were also eight nurses. Twenty-seven influenza patients were treated at the hospital and only one died. A list of those treated in the hospital included Bessie and her brother Oscar Bridge.³⁵

The Thornrose Cemetery is now the final resting place to more than 20,000 persons, some of whom were very important figures in the community, such as Mary Julia Baldwin. It is also, by far, the largest cemetery in the area. Curiosity led us to examine the death records of 1917 to 1919 to see how many burials were the result of flu or pneumonia. The records showed that in the years of 1917 and 1920, there was no one whose cause of death was influenza; however, between September 26, 1918, and March 26, 1919, there were thirty-four burials of people who died either of influenza or pneumonia.³⁶ Of these, there were eleven burials held in Thornrose during the month of October.³⁷ That number decreased to seven during the month of November and continued to decrease to six during the month of December.³⁸ The number of flu victims who were buried in Thornrose each month continued decreasing until there were only two in March.³⁹

An interesting fact to note is that several of the individuals who were buried in the Thornrose Cemetery did not die in Staunton. In fact, there were ten people who died in Maryland, West Virginia, or Ohio, obviously unexpectedly, and their bodies were shipped back to Staunton.⁴⁰ There were three days in which there were two flu victims buried on the same day. Those days were October 18, October 23, and December 30, 1918.⁴¹ Of note is the fact that December 30 is the only day that there were multiple deaths reported from the same location, which in this case was Staunton.⁴² The other two days that had multiple deaths involved individuals who died in completely separate areas like Baltimore and Staunton, or Hopewell, Virginia, and at sea.⁴³

In several instances newspaper articles were able to fill in the details of those Thornrose burial entries. For instance, on September 8, 1918, Henry Tilman of Saltville became the second influenza victim to be buried at the cemetery.

The remains of Henry O. Tilman, twenty-seven years of age, who died at his home in Saltville, Va., late Monday night after a brief illness with influenza and pneumonia, will arrive in Staunton this evening accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. H. N. Tilman, who were summoned to Saltville by their son's illness," noted a newspaper article.⁴⁴ Tilman was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Tilman, had graduated from Virginia Tech and was a chemist working in Saltville where he had married a local woman. They had two small children.

Mabel Paxton, age twenty-nine, was the ninth influenza victim to be buried at Thornrose on October 23. "The remains of Mrs. E. Vernon Paxton, who died in Baltimore, Monday of influenza, will reach Staunton Thursday morning on the early train. Services will be conducted at the grave, in Thornrose cemetery, at 11 o'clock, by Rev. W.Q. Hullihen, Mrs. Paxton having been a member of the Episcopal church."⁴⁵

Perhaps one of the saddest stories was that of seven-year-old Precious DePriest, who was the eleventh flu victim laid to rest in Thornrose. Her burial was on October 24. The newspaper account, under the headline "Influenza and Death Lay Low a Family Here," is somber.

Death, pneumonia, and Spanish influenza have at least one Staunton family within their grasp.

Within the home at 1216 West Main street now is a husband just able to sit up after an attack of influenza, the wife should be in bed, but is fighting a noble battle to retain strength to administer to the suffering, one daughter about eight years old lies a corpse, five children have the influenza, and the sixth, a baby about six months old is not expected to live, being afflicted with double pneumonia.

The home is that of a Mr. Hogan. His wife was Mrs. Kate DePriest, widow of the late C.L. De Priest, and all but the baby are her children by the former marriage.

The daughter [Precious] was taken yesterday afternoon about 4 o'clock, having first had influenza, pneumonia causing her death. She had been sick about twelve days.⁴⁶

As has been mentioned previously, the news of influenza victims included those serving in the military, most based stateside and preparing to ship out to the battlefield in Europe. Samples of the local headlines include the following military men who died from the flu:

Newspaper article describing the effects of the flu on a Staunton family.

**INFLUENZA AND
DEATH LAY LOW
A FAMILY HERE**

Death, pneumonia, and Spanish influenza have at least one Staunton family within their grasp.

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The home is that of a Mr. Hogan. His wife was Mrs. Kate De Priest, widow of the late C. L. De Priest, and all but the baby are her children by the former marriage.

The daughter was taken yesterday afternoon about 4 o'clock, having first had influenza, pneumonia causing her death. She had been sick about twelve days.

Edwin Dameron Dies At Camp Humphreys From The Influenza [from Stuarts Draft]

Russell Snyder Is Laid To Rest [Died at camp in N.J. and was from Churchville]

[Private J.I. Ralston] Dies at Camp Lee [from Highland County]

W. R. Hevener Is Victim Of Influenza While At Norfolk [from Staunton]

Chas. P. Hodge, U.S. Navy, Dead [died in Norfolk, from Stuarts Draft]⁴⁷

So what happened in 1918 in the Staunton-Waynesboro-Augusta County area and around the world? Over the years, scientists have learned more and more about what a virus is and how to stop and prevent its spread. They have learned that there are two different strains of viruses, virus A strains

**CHAS. P. HODGE,
U. S. NAVY, DEAD**

To the honor roll of Augusta boys, who have given their life for the cause of humanity, is added the name of Charles Preston Hodge, who joined the Navy and reported for duty in Norfolk three weeks ago. Soon after he reported he was taken ill with influenza, which later developed into pneumonia, and for the last week, he has been making a brave fight for his life in the base hospital at Norfolk. He succumbed at 7:30 Monday evening, and with him to the last were his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Hodge, of Stuarts Draft, who were called to his bedside last week.

Mr. Hodge was about twenty-six years of age, and was one of Augusta's finest young men, a devoted Christian, and highly esteemed by all who knew him. He had been assisting his father on the farm, until he enlisted in the Navy, and he was one of the best known young men in the Stuarts Draft section. Since childhood he had been a member of Tinkling Spring Presbyterian church. Surviving besides his parents is one brother, Earl Hodge.

Much sympathy is expressed for the bereaved parents, as this is the second son they have lost in recent years. Another son, Harry, having died several years ago, in his twenty-first year.

Mr. and Mrs. Hodge will return home on an evening train and the remains of their son will arrive within the next few days, and will be conveyed to the home, near Stuarts Draft.

**DRAFT CALLS TO
BE ISSUED NOW**

**RUSSELL SNYDER
IS LAID AT REST**

Services for Russell Snyder, son of Mr. and Mrs. George H. Snyder, of near Churchville, were held at the grave Friday afternoon, conducted by Rev. Wm. C. White, pastor of Loch Willow Church, of which the deceased was a member, assisted by Rev. Luther Propes.

Mr. Snyder died Monday in an army camp, at Salem, N. J., from pneumonia, contracted from influenza, and his death was a great shock to his family and friends, as it was not known that he was ill.

He volunteered and was sent to the Training Detachment at the University. Upon completing the course he was given a month's leave in order to assist on the farm, but was called to camp at the end of three weeks. He died shortly after returning to duty.

Surviving Mr. Snyder, besides his parents, is a brother, Charles Snyder, and two sisters, Mrs. Newton Acord and Miss Catherine Snyder.

The bearers at the funeral were Peyton Russell, Jesse and Clayborne, and Hught Shaffer. Flower bearers were Misses Anna Laura Shaeffer, Laura and Virginia Sites, Mrs. Paul Spittler, Stuart Sites, and Manson Baylor.

Mr. Snyder was the first member of Loch Willow church to give his life for humanity, and the first in the community to die in camp. Another boy, Luther W. Fisher, of the same neighborhood gave his life on the battlefield of France, but Mr. Snyder is the first whose remains have been brought back for burial at home. He was a fine young man, with many friends to mourn his loss.

MEETING POSTPONED
On account of the epidemic of

Two examples of servicemen from the area who died of influenza.

and virus B strains.⁴⁸ Virus A strains are ones that mutate rapidly meaning that an individual has the possibility of catching it year after year.⁴⁹ Virus B strains do not mutate as quickly.⁵⁰ In recent years, scientists have been able to recreate the 1918 flu by collecting lung tissue from bodies of 1918 influenza victims that had been frozen under layers of permafrost.⁵¹ This has allowed scientists an opportunity to understand what made this virus so deadly that it took the lives of so many young, healthy people. While the 1918 H1N1

virus has been synthesized and evaluated, the properties that made it so devastating are still not well understood. One school of thought now is that the virus overstimulated the immune response system of its victims. Those within the population who were the strongest with the healthiest immune systems were the hardest hit because their immune systems never cut off.⁵²

However, should such a pandemic occur again, modern medicine is better prepared. In 1918, with no vaccine to protect against influenza infection and with no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections that can be associated with influenza infections, control efforts worldwide were limited to non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, the use of disinfectants, and limitations of public gatherings, which were applied unevenly across the nation and around the world.

Every major flu pandemic the world has experienced since 1918 has been connected to this one. The viruses have been a mutation in one form or another of this unique pandemic virus. Because it sickened and killed so much of the world's population, every other pandemic is compared to this one and the way we react to pandemic threats is based on a virus's potential to kill like this one did. The research on the impact of the 1918 flu pandemic on Staunton and Augusta County and the many institutions there shows that there were a lot of people who fell ill during this period of time. Even as the world's first-ever global conflict was drawing to a close, communities like those in the Staunton-Waynesboro-Augusta County area were recovering from a deadly attack on the home front. At home and abroad, the fall of 1918 was certainly one for the history books.

Endnotes

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- ¹⁵Mary Baldwin University's (Staunton, Va.) archives, 1918-1919 Board Minutes. Transcribed by Caitlyn Alexander and Nancy Sorrells, November 2018.
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- ²⁰Ibid.
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- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷*Virginia Guide* newspaper. November 1, 1918. Information supplied by Mary Kraus, October 2018.
- ²⁸Ibid.
- ²⁹Ibid.
- ³⁰Ibid.
- ³¹Quarantine Lifted by the Board of Health, *Staunton Morning Leader*, Front Page, October 31, 1918.
- ³²*Staunton Daily Leader*, October 9, 1918.
- ³³Ibid.
- ³⁴Bessie Hailey, *The Personal Journal of Bessie Hailey, October 17, 1900-February 1, 1986*, provided by Hailey's granddaughter, Vera Hailey in an email August 4, 2018.
- ³⁵Staunton newspaper, November 5, 1918.
- ³⁶Thornrose Cemetery (Staunton, Va.) burial records, 1917-1919. Transcribed by Nancy Sorrells, September 2018.
- ³⁷Ibid.
- ³⁸Ibid.
- ³⁹Ibid.
- ⁴⁰Ibid.
- ⁴¹Ibid.
- ⁴²Ibid.
- ⁴³Ibid.
- ⁴⁴Staunton newspaper article.
- ⁴⁵Staunton newspaper article.
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- ⁴⁷Ibid.
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- ⁴⁹Kolata, 86.
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