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THE FORGOTTEN PANDEMIC:

A Short History of the 1918-1919 Influenza Outbreak
and the Effect on Kalamazoo and Western State Normal
School

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Honor's Thesis
Spring 2013
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The influenza outbreak of 1918-1919 began its widespread destruction in September of 1918. Before the outbreak was over, more than twenty-five percent of the United States population became ill.¹ However, the United States was not alone in this silent war. The influenza outbreak (named the “Spanish Flu” or “La Grippe” at this time) killed approximately fifty million people worldwide and is considered to be the “world’s worst pandemic” since the onset of written history.² This disease outbreak, a tragic ending to World War One, killed more people than the Great War itself.³ However, unlike the soldiers of World War One who were able to protect themselves with guns and weaponry, no one was immune or protected in this war. Michigan, including Kalamazoo and the campus of Western State Normal School also suffered (both socially and by student death) from the 1918-1919 outbreak of the influenza.

The word “influenza” has been around for hundreds of years. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word influenza (Italian for ‘influence’) was first recorded in 1504. It was believed during this time that the sickness was linked to the alignment of the planets. Early Renaissance Italians believed that the sickness struck when the planets were misaligned and resulted in a “strange malady that could not be seen or heard or smelled, yet had the power to

¹ Gina Kolata, *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused it* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000), 6-7.

² Tom Quinn, “The World’s Worst Pandemic: The ‘Spanish Flu of 1918’” in *Flu: a Social History of Influenza* (London: New Holland Publishers, 2008), 123.

³ Molly Billings, “The Influenza Pandemic of 1918,” <http://virus.stanford.edu/uda/> (accessed January 29, 2011)

kill.”⁴ Although the sickness had been around for many centuries, people rarely gave it any thought or attention.

Even though doctors and medical officials did not know or realize it at the time, the influenza H1N1 virus was (and still is) extremely complicated. This virus, whose only function in life is to replicate, has a long history of mutation and adaptation. According to recent pathological studies, The H1N1 influenza virus probably originated from wild aquatic birds. The virus infects the gastrointestinal tract of birds, allows the virus to replicate, and is then released through their droppings. After it is released, the virus then contaminates lakes and water supplies, where it might have been picked up by pigs, and eventually humans.⁵

Normally, bird viruses cannot infect humans because the viruses interact with different cell receptors. According to a study conducted in 2004, in order for them to interact, the influenza virus’s hemagglutinins (spike-like molecules in viruses that bind to particular receptors in cells) would have to greatly mutate to allow the bird virus to attach to human receptor cells. According to recent studies that analyzed a sample of the 1918 strand of influenza (taken from victims preserved in the Alaskan permafrost), the virus’s hemagglutinins did mutate, allowing the virus to attach to human cells, and thus allowing for human-to-human transmission.⁶

The H1N1 virus is able to change because it mutates at an alarmingly fast rate through a radical mutation process called antigen shift.⁷ Because of this ability to mutate alarmingly fast, the influenza outbreak can be divided into three waves or three different adaptations. The first wave, lasting from January to around June of 1918, was the weakest. This is because the virus

⁴ Quinn, 16.

⁵ Jeffrey K. Taubenberger, “The Origin and Virulence of the 1918 ‘Spanish’ *Influenza Virus*, *Journal of the Proceedings of the American Philosophy Society* 150, no. 1 (March 2006), 86-112, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2720273/>.

⁶ Stefan Lovgren, “Disastrous 1918 Flu Linked to Birds, Study says,” *National Geographic*, October 28, 2010, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/02/0205_040205_spanishflu.html.

⁷ Taubenberger.

was in the midst of adapting from birds to the human body. The second wave, lasting from August to November 1918 was the deadliest wave, and was when the H1N1 virus was at its peak. The third wave, lasting from December 1918 to February 1919, with scattered cases until the early 1920s, was also weak because of a building immunity to the virus.⁸

No one truly knows where the pandemic first got its start in humans. However, the disease made its first documented appearance in the rural farmland and chicken coops of Haskell County, Kansas in January of 1918.⁹ Most of the early documented evidence comes from Haskell County doctor, Loring Miner. Dr. Miner began to notice that multiple people in the hundred square mile radius where he practiced, had started to come down with a common form of influenza. However, these patients (who were located on isolated farms), exhibited symptoms of terrifying intensity, including violent headaches, body aches, and nonproductive coughing. He diagnosed these symptoms as influenza, but was concerned and terrified of the intensity of what he saw. Dr. Miner contacted the United States Public Health Service for advice and assistance, but he did not receive a reply. Although the disease was terrifying and already spreading quickly, it was not given attention by health officials because it was mostly contained on isolated farms.¹⁰

In fact, even with an alarming number of reported cases, the spring 1918 edition of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* contains no mention of the disease.¹¹ This is because influenza was not considered to be “reportable,” that is, it was not a disease that physicians were required by law to report or one that any health agency tracked. It would not be

⁸ John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), 102-103.

⁹ Quinn, 16.

¹⁰ Barry, 93.

¹¹ Alfred W. Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, (Westport, Conn., Cambridge University Press, 1998), 18-19.

considered “reportable” until September 21, 1918, and by that time creating a program to stop infection would already be too late.¹²

By mid-February of 1918, Dr. Miner was overwhelmed with influenza cases. While a large portion of the population was ill, a few soldiers stationed at Camp Funston (located approximately 300 miles away) returned home from Haskell County while on leave.¹³ Camp Funston, located within the Fort Riley military reservation, was a training camp that prepared new soldiers for war. The camp was built in July 1917 and was designed to hold around 40,000 soldiers from the U.S. army’s 89th division, and was the second largest encampment in the country.¹⁴ However, Funston faced a significant problem in the record cold winter of 1917-1918 as barracks were overcrowded, supplies and clothing were low, and heating was insufficient and poor. This overcrowding forced the army to go against its space regulations that were written for health reasons, and crowd men into small spaces perfect for .¹⁵

Because of the small but constant traffic of soldiers from Haskell County and movement to the camp in general, Camp Funston soon became infected with the flu. On March 4, 1918, an army cook at the camp was reported ill. Within three weeks, 1,100 soldiers were admitted into the camp hospital and thousands more were reporting symptoms. According to camp hospital records, 237 men (twenty percent of those hospitalized) developed pneumonia from influenza. However, of these 237 hospitalized men, only 38 died.¹⁶ Although the percentage of death was low, it was startlingly enough to invoke concern. However, during the outbreak and throughout the weeks after, Funston continued to ship out a constant stream of soldiers to other military

¹² Barry, 205.

¹³ Barry, 95.

¹⁴ “Camp Funston,” *Kansapedia: Kansas Historical Society*, February 2013, <http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/camp-funston/16692> (accessed April 6, 2013).

¹⁵ Barry, 96.

¹⁶ Barry, 96.

bases and to Europe. According to author and historian John Barry, those men, whose business was to kill would be “more proficient at it then they could ever imagine.”¹⁷

The sickness in Haskell County, Camp Funston, and similar outbreaks in Camps Forrest and Greenleaf in Georgia¹⁸ would make up the majority of the first and relatively mild wave of influenza in the United States. By April of 1918, however, the infection had spread first to bases in France, to bases in England and Germany, and later to Spain.¹⁹ According to a recent epidemiological study by the University of Barcelona, the infection in Spain most likely was a result of the heavy railroad traffic of Spanish and Portuguese migrant workers to and from France.²⁰ It is here, in the spring of 1918, when the disease picked up its name and became known as the “Spanish Influenza.”

Spain was a neutral country during World War 1, which meant that the Spanish government felt no need to censor its press from negativity to protect the morale of its people. Therefore, unlike the American and French press, Spanish newspapers were filled with reports and warnings of the disease.²¹ The first public announcement of the “French flu’ as it was called by the Spaniards, was reported in Madrid’s ABC newspaper on May 22, 1918.²² The news reported that there was a new and strange influenza-like disease that had been ongoing since the beginning of May. A week later, on May 28, 1918, Spanish King Alphonse XIII and several of his cabinet members became infected. This kept the illness as daily news, under the headline “la epidemia reinante” (“the prevailing epidemic”) and was quickly picked up by newspapers

¹⁷ Barry, 97.

¹⁸ Barry, 169.

¹⁹ Barry, 170.

²⁰ Antoni Trilla, Guillem Trilla, and Carolyn Daer, “The 1918 ‘Spanish Flu’ in Spain,” *Journal of Clinical Infectious Diseases* 47 no. 5 (2008): 668-673. <http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/47/5/668.long> (accessed April 6, 2013).

²¹ Barry, 171.

²² Trilla.

throughout Europe and the United States.²³ Because of this, the Spanish were blamed for the infection (although it had been spreading in American military camps for months), and it acquired the misnomer, the “Spanish Flu.”

Back in the United States, President Woodrow Wilson and his military advisors did not comprehend the seriousness of the outbreak. The rapid spread of influenza (as well as the subsequent deaths) might have been spared had Wilson taken the advice of prominent doctors and stopped and quarantined the rapid movement of troops into Europe. However, the war raged on and the American military needed troops.²⁴

Consequently, World War One created a perfect environment for the spread of the virus. Because Europe had been at war for four years, the general health of the population was weakened by poor nutrition and poor housing.²⁵ Together with the overcrowded soldier barracks, this was a perfect recipe for mass infection in both the United States and Europe. Army camps in the United States were dangerously overcrowded. Consequently, soldier health care was not seen as highly important during these times. Hospitals were usually the last part of the camp to be constructed and were designed to hold just a few soldiers at a time. Although the army was concerned with its soldier’s health, army officials did not want to put too much effort into medical care because they believed it could “make their men too soft.”²⁶ Although the conditions were perfect for infection, the first and milder wave would mostly die out by the beginning of summer in 1918.²⁷

²³ Trilla.

²⁴ Quinn, 126.

²⁵ Quinn, 126.

²⁶ Quinn, 127.

²⁷ Barry, 166.

The second and most deadly wave of the pandemic arrived in the United States in September of 1918. Camp Devens (thirty miles northwest of Boston) was the first to experience the new wave of infection. Unlike the first wave of infection, which was extremely contagious but mostly harmless, this new infection or wave was much more terrifying and lethal. On September 23, 1918, the U.S. Surgeon General sent Doctor William Henry Welch (a prominent pathologist and scientist) and four other doctors to Camp Devens to figure out what was going on. What the doctors saw horrified them. The camp, which was built to house 35,000 men, actually held around 45,000. The influenza virus was everywhere. In just the first twenty-four hours of the doctors' visit, 66 men had succumbed to the disease.²⁸ By the end of September, twenty percent of the soldiers were infected with the flu. One doctor at the camp, known simply as "Roy," wrote to his friend about his experience with dealing with the flu:

"The men start with what appears to be an ordinary attack of La Grippe or Influenza, and when brought to the Hosp. they very rapidly develop the most vicious type of pneumonia that has ever been seen. Two hours after admission they have Mahogany spots over the cheek bones, and a few hours later you can begin to see the Cyanosis extending from their ears and spreading all over the face, until it is hard to distinguish the coloured men from the white. It is only a matter of a few hours then until death comes, and it is simply a struggle for air until they suffocate. It is horrible ... we have been averaging about 100 deaths per day, and still keeping it up."¹¹

As more and more soldiers became ill from the outbreak, there was a rapid call for doctors and nurses to tend the sick. On September 27, 1918, the American Red Cross created a National Committee on Influenza to call in and mobilize nurses across the United States. The need was so dire that even inexperienced nursing students were encouraged to volunteer.³⁰

²⁸Kolata, 19.

²⁹Quinn 128-129.

³⁰Katrina E. Rodies, "The Great Call: The Pandemic of 1918," *Nursing and Health Care Perspectives* 19, no. 5 (September/October 1998): 204-205, <http://ovidsp.tx.ovid.com/> (accessed February 7, 2011).

Doctors and nurses had a very challenging job in tending the sick. Because there was not enough adequate hospital space to house the infected, every square inch of the hospitals was lined with mattresses (including hallways and broom cupboards).³¹

Although the virus was mostly attacking military bases and camps at this time, civilians were not immune. Visiting nurses saw particularly gruesome scenes as they walked the city. They could go on duty with a list of fifteen patients and end up seeing forty or more. In Philadelphia, one nurse remembers a ghastly scene when she “found a husband dead in the same room where his wife lay with newly born twins. It had been twenty-four hours since the death and the births, and the wife had had no food but an apple which happened to lie within reach.”³²

Among the quick and rapid spread of the virus, the most terrifying aspect of influenza in the cities was the piling of dead bodies. Because the disease spread so fast and took life so quickly, undertakers, gravediggers, and coffin makers could not keep up with the dead. In Philadelphia, the gravediggers were so overwhelmed that the director of the city jail offered to have prisoners dig the graves, but had to take back the offer when he discovered that there were no healthy guards left to watch them.³³

In addition to the lack of gravediggers, undertakers quickly ran out of coffins and places to stack the bodies of the dead. Michael Donohue, whose family owned a funeral home in Philadelphia stated, “We had caskets stacked up outside the funeral home. We had to have guards kept on them because people were stealing them.”³⁴ However, after a few weeks of

infection, there were no caskets left to steal. Resident Louis Apurchase remembered:

³¹ Quinn, 130.

³² Alfred W. Crosby, *Epidemic and Peace, 1918* (London: Greenwood Press, 1976), 76.

³³ Barry, 223.

³⁴ Barry, 223.

“A neighbor boy about seven or eight died and they used to just pick you up and wrap you up in a sheet and put you in a patrol wagon. So the mother and father screaming, ‘Let me get a macaroni box [for a coffin] – macaroni, any kind of pasta, used to come in this box, about twenty pounds of macaroni fit in it. – ‘please, please let me put him in the macaroni box, don’t take him away like that...’”³⁵

With no caskets and no one to bury them, bodies quickly stacked up in city morgues. Morgues that had room for thirty to forty bodies, would have two hundred or more stacked there. Because of this, families often wrapped their dead family members in sheets, placed them in a closed off room, or carried them outside to decay on their porch.³⁶

With the onset of the second wave of the pandemic, the only thing certain about the “Spanish Flu” was that it was unlike any sickness in the world. One particularly unique characteristic was that the sickness seemed to prey heavily on the young and healthy. There were many reports of young adults (between the ages of 20-40), who were perfectly healthy one day and then suddenly collapsed on the street the next day.³⁷

The most bizarre symptom of the second and third waves of the “Spanish Influenza” was that the patient’s skin began to change color. The blue or even black skin coloration (known as cyanosis) was “evidence that the patient’s infected lungs were unable to transfer adequate amounts of oxygen to the bloodstream.”³⁸ After the patient struggled for days or even hours to breathe, their bodies began to shut down. The stress of breathing either caused the patient to have a heart attack or their organs collapsed from the strain. Most people did not die from cyanosis directly. Instead, the majority of influenza related deaths were caused by a form of bacterial pneumonia (pneumococcal pneumonia). This cause greatly surprised doctors because usually

³⁵ Barry, 223.

³⁶ Barry, 224.

³⁷ Kolata, 4.

³⁸ Quinn, 132-133.

only the very young, the old, or the ill caught and succumbed to this disease.³⁹

When doctors performed autopsies on the newly dead they were astonished to find that the heart and lungs were double their normal size in weight. They discovered that the influenza virus completely destroyed the lungs of its victims. The doctors noticed that the lungs were filled with a “bloody frothing fluid” instead of air. To further test this theory, they routinely placed the diseased lungs into buckets of water. In this situation, a normal lung would float on top of the water, but they instead found that the diseased and airless lungs sank almost immediately.⁴⁰

In addition to the attack on the lungs, the “Spanish Influenza” had other horrible and painful symptoms. Those who were bedridden with less severe symptoms often had inflamed noses and throats, intense headaches and coughs, difficulty breathing, tiredness, high temperatures, and severe aches and pains. The most disturbing and shocking symptom was the amount of blood that endlessly flowed from the ears, nose, and eyes. Later, when doctors performed autopsies, they discovered that that these cavities were often completely filled with a bloody mixture.⁴¹

Like most of the United States, the second wave of the influenza outbreak hit Kalamazoo and the campus of Western State Normal School in September of 1918. Although the *Kalamazoo Gazette* had been following the national stories (including infection outbreaks in Chicago and New York), it is not until the September 25, 1918 edition that it began to publish about local fear of the pandemic. The article discussed that with 40,000 soldiers stationed at Camp Custer, keeping infection out of the camp was almost impossible. The article also discussed the steps that Camp Custer officials were taking in order to avoid infection as long as possible. The first step

³⁹ Keith P. Klugman, Christina Mills Astley, and Marc Lipstich, “Times From Illness Onset to Death, 1918 Influenza and Pneumococcal Pneumonia,” *Infectious Diseases* 15, no. 2 (February 2009): 346-347, <http://find.galegroup.com/> (accessed February 6, 2011).

⁴⁰ Quinn, 132.

⁴¹ Quinn, 133.

was to hang mosquito nets around all beds to prevent the spray of coughing and sneezing from becoming airborne. Second, if any cases of infection were discovered, the infected would be placed in the base hospital immediately. Third, those living in the infected company would be placed in quarantine and not allowed to partake in large gatherings (eating in the mess hall, attending places of entertainment, etc). In addition, the quarantined men would have their noses and throats sprayed twice daily with a “preventive solution.”⁴² On September 27, 1918, the state of Michigan also tried to stop infection by forbidding new soldiers from being inducted into military camps (with the exception of college training schools).⁴³

Even with these new preventive steps, Camp Custer and the Kalamazoo area were unable to avoid mass flu infection. On September 30, 1918, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* announced that the city had been struck hard with the flu. The article stated that there was no recorded number of outbreaks, but that the city estimates that around 5% of the population was infected. Medical officials warned that the only way to prevent yourself from obtaining the disease is to avoid those who are infected. Along with this, those infected should refrain from social gatherings and should be confined to bed.⁴⁴

On October 3, 1918, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* announced that 4,000 men were infected at Camp Custer. Four-hundred enlisted men at the camp were called into the block hospital to aide in caring for the men. In addition, the article also lists the names of twelve soldiers who had already lost their lives to pneumonia caused by influenza.⁴⁵ As a result of the rapid spread of the infection, the camp was forced to cancel all social activities (athletics, singing and theater

⁴²Burr Osborn, “Camp Fights to Keep Out the ‘Influ’: Custer optimistic but fears disease cannot be prevented from entering,” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, September 25, 1918.

⁴³“Stop Sending Men to Camp: suspend all inductions on account of outbreak of Spanish ‘infl,’” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, September 27, 1918.

⁴⁴“Spanish Influenza Spreading in City,” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, September 30, 1918.

⁴⁵“4,000 Influenza Cases at Custer: 1,010 admitted to Base Hospital with disease in last 24 hours” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, October 3, 1918.

productions, trips to town and church, etc.) in order to focus on fighting the flu.⁴⁶

As the number of people in Kalamazoo infected with the “Spanish Influenza” rose, so did the need for medical assistance. Because there were so many cases and not enough nurses, the supervisor of the public health nurses (Miss Gertrude Bowens) put a notice in the newspaper for volunteers. The volunteers (women between the age of 20 and 60) would be paid and would visit the homes of sick families to insure they had proper food and care. According to Miss Bowens, there were too many reported cases of influenza and already there were seven confirmed cases where the entire household was infected.⁴⁷ By the time the epidemic has run its course (April 1919), 4,026 cases of influenza had been reported in Kalamazoo including 126 deaths.⁴⁸

Along with Camp Custer and the city of Kalamazoo, the campus of Western State Normal School (now Western Michigan University) was greatly affected by the onset of the flu. Out of the approximately 1,000 students enrolled at Western Normal, eight students died from pneumonia caused by influenza from October 1918 to January 1919.⁴⁹ Along with dealing with the tragic deaths of the students, the outbreak completely disrupted the inner workings of the school. Social activities were suspended, large gatherings forbidden, and the school finally closed for a short time.

The first mention of the influenza outbreak in the *Western Herald* came at the beginning of the 1918 fall term. On October 8, 1918, Western Normal held the first general assembly of the fall term. In the absence of President Waldo, Dr. W.R. McCracken introduced the head of the

⁴⁶ “Camp Custer Quits Drilling to Fight ‘influ’: Epidemic puts blink on every topic of conversation at camp” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, October 4, 1918.

⁴⁷ “Seek Volunteers to Combat ‘flu’: Want Women to go into Homes Where Families are Ill with Disease” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, October 11, 1918.

⁴⁸ “Kalamazoo History,” The City of Kalamazoo, <http://www.kalamazoocity.org/docs/kalamazoohistory.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁴⁹ “The Great Influenza Epidemic of 1918,” *Kalamazoo Valley Museum Museography* 8, issue 1 (Fall 2008), 19.

health committee (Dr. L.H. Harvey) to discuss ways of preventing the spread of the Spanish Influenza. Dr. Harvey encouraged the students to practice good hygiene, eat healthy food, and exercise sufficiently in the open air. He also proposed that the students memorize and follow a set of “prophylactic measures” (published previously in the *Western Herald*) to avoid contact with the flu.⁵⁰ These measures included: gargling and washing out the nasal passages every morning and night, covering the nose when coughing or sneezing, not sharing towels, washing hands frequently, avoiding crowds, frequent bathing, and many others.⁵¹

Similarly, on October 6, 1918, the Kalamazoo Gazette published an article about keeping a close watch on the outbreaks in the city schools. The article explained that at Western State Normal School, all student and faculty members (or anyone associated with the school) were required to report any “slight indisposition” and contact a physician immediately. Along with this, the school reported that only four men of Western’s S.A.T.C. (Student Army Training Corps) had shown any signs of illness. They were immediately taken to New Borgess hospital where they were rapidly recovering.⁵² Among these preventative measures, on October 10, 1918, the social committee of Western Normal banned all large gatherings. By doing this, the committee hoped to contain the rapid spread of infection. Because this included athletic events, movies, and dances, the ban completely restricted the social lives of students.⁵³

On October 17, 1918, Elsa Nelson became the first student to die from pneumonia caused by influenza. Nelson’s death was described as sudden and shocking (her sickness lasted one week) and caused a frantic stir within the student population. She was the president of the Young

⁵⁰“Normal Holds First Assembly of Term: Health Talk and Pep Singing Constitute the Program,” *Western Herald*, October 9, 1918.

⁵¹ “Don’t Get Influenza; Just Follow this Advice: Dr. L.H. Harvey tells how to prevent an epidemic,” *Western Herald*, October 2, 1918.

⁵² “Keeping Close Watch for Influenza in City Schools,” *Kalamazoo Gazette*, October 6, 1918.

⁵³ “No Big Gatherings Until ‘Flu’ Passes,” *Western Herald*, October 10, 1918.

Woman's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) and extremely popular. When her condition had worsened, she was immediately taken to New Borgess hospital where her parents (Mr. Olaf Nelson and Mrs. Anna Nelson) as well as members of the Western Normal faculty never left her side. Elsa Nelson was well liked and described as a girl of "unusually attractive personality, possessed of a bright and cheery disposition, radiating sunshine where she went. She had a fine mind and a keen perception."⁵⁴ The October 23, 1918 edition of the *Western Herald*, it was reported that the Y.W.C.A would adjourn for a week because of the death of President Nelson. The article states "there was hardly a dry eye left within the room as the session continued."⁵⁵

On October 21, 1918, the second student to die from pneumonia caused by influenza was Gabriella Payne. Payne was a senior in the physical education department and was described as having "unusually fine physical strength."⁵⁶ Payne's death was another huge blow to the student population, as she was described as one of the most popular girls in school. She was the president of the Woman's League, which was the biggest and most popular woman's organization at the time. As with Nelson, Payne's illness was also sudden and shocking. She died too within a week of being taken to Bronson Hospital.⁵⁷

On October 23, 1918, the first eight grades of the training school of Western Normal closed and students were sent home. The school, in co-operation with the health and welfare commission, hoped to stop the influenza outbreak from spreading.⁵⁸ On October 30, 1918, Western State Normal School posted a notice in the *Western Herald* that it was closing until

⁵⁴ "Elsa Nelson Succumbs to Attack of Spanish 'Flu': President of Western Normal Y.W.C.A. Dies Following Brief Illness, *Western Herald*, October 23, 1918.

⁵⁵ "Girls Postpone Their Meetings," *Western Herald*, October 23, 1918.

⁵⁶ "Gabriella Payne Dies of Influenza Monday Noon," *Western Herald*, October 23, 1918.

⁵⁷ "Gabriella Payne Dies of Influenza Monday Noon," *Western Herald*, October 23, 1918.

⁵⁸ "Training School is Closed," *Western Herald*, October 23, 1918.

further notice. Exams and classes are canceled just a week before Thanksgiving break.⁵⁹

The third and fourth victims to fall as a result of influenza were George Habel and Henry James Perkins. Habel was a new student and member of the Western State Normal Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.). However, he was never formally inducted into S.A.T.C. because shortly after he arrived in Kalamazoo, he was stricken with the flu and died.⁶⁰ Similarly, Henry James Perkins died on November 6, 1918. He was also a member of the S.A.T.C. He was one of the first victims to be stricken with the flu. Taken to New Borgess Hospital, he was described as greatly improving and was thought would fully recover. His sickness, however, returned and he remained in critical condition until his death. Perkins was given a military funeral in his hometown of Lawson, Michigan. He was well known with the S.A.T.C., and several of the members attended his funeral.⁶¹

The last four students of Western Normal died from pneumonia caused by influenza over the winter/Christmas break. These four included George Upfield, Ruth Cramer, Jessie Richmond Denney, and Cora Marie Everse. Jessie Richmond Denney was the oldest student at Western Normal. She had an unusual educational story, as she had received her high school diploma when she was fifty years old. In her home town of Grand Rapids, Michigan, she was described as being a prominent member of the Grand Rapids Women's Club. At the time of her death, a book of poems she had written was ready to be sent for publication. Sadly, the influenza outbreak took her life before she was able to publish them.⁶²

In the end, the influenza outbreak of 1918-1919 took the lives of eight students at Western State Normal School. Most of the students' illnesses were very shocking and sudden to

⁵⁹ "Extension Work is Under Ban." *Western Herald*, October 30, 1918.

⁶⁰ "George Habel is Flu Victim," *Western Herald*, October 23, 1918.

⁶¹ "Military Funeral for Former S.A.T.C. Man," *Western Herald*, November 11, 1918.

⁶² "Four Die During Holiday Vacation," *Western Herald*, January 8, 1919.

their parents and to the general public. The students themselves were greatly mourned and missed by their peers, faculty, and staff. Sadly, the eight students at Western Normal were just a small percentage of the world that lost their lives to the flu. In the United States, approximately 540,000 people died. Worldwide, 50 million people (5% of the world population) lost their lives in the most devastating silent war that the human world has ever seen.⁶³

⁶³ Quinn, 149.

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