



NORWICH
Historical Society
Digital History

"As From a Bolt From a Clear Sky" Spanish Influenza in Norwich

by Lauren Pidgeon



It seems in the past week, I've talked about nothing except Coronavirus. It's taken over our world, making us cancel many social events and stock up on hand sanitizer. It made me wonder how Norwich got through the 1918 Influenza pandemic. The 1918 *Hanover Gazette* shows that, like today, Norwich and Hanover residents practiced social distancing, supported their neighbors, experienced propaganda in the news, and looked to state governments for guidance. It was also the middle of World War I which complicated responses.

Timeline of Influenza related to the Upper Valley

Information drawn from- ["Cold Comfort" by Laura Stephenson Carter](#)

1918

March- The first case of flu in America is reported in Kansas.

September- Vermont health officials declares the flu to be a "contagious and infectious disease" and advise those who are ill to stay home and those who have been in contact with the ill to self quarantine for 4 days.

September 18th- The first case of the flu comes to Mary Hitchcock Hospital.

October 4th- VT Governor bans public gatherings such as school, church, and other public entertainment. Norwich schools close.

Newspaper clippings from the *Hanover Gazette* reveal the story in Norwich

Like today, many Norwich citizens practiced public distancing and canceled many public events.

The churches were closed last Sunday and no services held. The oldest inhabitants cannot remember a time when no service was held either in the morning or evening. The Ladies' Aid and Literary Club meetings which were to have been held this week are also postponed indefinitely.

Hanover Gazette
Norwich, Oct. 10, 1918

Dr. and Mrs. L. B. Jones, Guy Smith, Mrs. W. G. Ballam, and Delia Balduc are among the recent victims of the influenza. Schools were closed last Wednesday at noon for the remainder of the week and are closed this week.

Clip noting school closures, *Hanover Gazette* Norwich, Oct. 2, 1918

These girls were home from college, probably Normal School, where they were learning to teach.

Hanover Gazette
Norwich, Oct. 10, 1918

Those who are at home on account of schools closed are: Miss Mary Olds; Miss Blanche Haskell; Miss Margaret Lewis; Mrs. Helen Bicknell Thomas; Miss Marjorie Foster; and Miss Rena Ballam,

In the article below from the *Hanover Gazette*, Oct. 3 1918, it's evident that during this time of crisis, neighbors came together and helped each other out.

enza. Mrs. Ashley had bronchial pneumonia and Miss Delia Balduc and Miss Grace Clifford cared for them until Mrs. Ashley's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lapiere of Concord, N. H., came last Sunday. Since then the mother has hardly left her daughter's side. Mrs. John Hazen is caring for little Yvonne, and the baby is at J. W. Armstrong's, Mrs. Lyman caring for him.

Through the whole pandemic health officer, Dr. L.B.Jones, known as the horse and buggy doctor, helped by making house calls to treat patients. He also ordered quarantines and signed death certificates.



The war played a big role in the story of the pandemic. In Vermont, and around the U.S, many of the doctors and nurses had joined the army and were helping the troops overseas. Medical students and retired nurses had to step up and help. The war also made nationalist politics and blame a part of the pandemic, as shown below in a *Hanover Gazette* article from Oct. 3, 1918.

SPANISH INFLUENZA

—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? *

...about everything that is per-
fidious in the world today to Germany,
some have ventured the guess that the
disease may have been introduced and
spread by German agents. This theory,
however, is generally considered as be-
ing not only entirely groundless but
really absurd, for it seems hardly con-
ceivable that, if Germany undertook an
offensive of this kind, she would choose
such a mild and humane sort of disease.

The newspapers are filled with ads for cures, like the one below.

**Spanish Influenza can
be prevented easier than
it can be cured.**

**At the first sign of a
shiver or sneeze, take**

**HILL'S
CASCARA
-BROMIDE-
QUININE**

Standard cold remedy for 20 years—in tablet
form—safe, sure, no opiates—breaks up a cold
in 24 hours—relieves grip in 3 days. Money
back if it fails. The genuine box has a Red top
with Mr. Hill's picture. At All Drug Stores.

As this clip shows, by
November, Influenza was
back.

*Hanover
Gazette Norwich,
Nov. 21, 1918*

NORWICH

The influenza seems to have taken a
new foothold in this place. Three mem-
bers of F. W. Fitzgerald's family are
among the victims. Mrs. Campbell of
Strafford, Vt., has been with her daugh-
ter, Miss Margaret, at Mr. Fitzgerald's
home to care for
Chase, and the whole family of R.
Cossingham are in quarantine for the
same disease.

In Vermont, there were 43,735 reported cases of influenza between September 1918-February 1919. Of the people who contracted it, 1,772 people died meaning that 4% of Vermont residents who got the flu, died.

Interested in learning more about the Spanish Influenza in Vermont?

[Recalling the Flu Pandemic of 1918](#)

[The Flu Epidemic, 1918](#)

[Cold Comfort](#)

[Fletcher, VT case study](#)

About the Project



Lauren Pidgeon is a Hanover High student from Norwich who is interested in our community's history.

She spent her March Intensive exploring public history here at the Norwich Historical Society.

Enjoying our digital history? Support our work by becoming a member.
Memberships begin at \$15.

[Click Here to Join](#)

Copyright © 2020 Norwich Historical Society, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

